Framing Refugees' (Un-) Deservingness

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Abstract

‘Framing’ is a communicative tool that is used to paint an issue in a specific light. The notion that even minor changes in how ‘calculating’ politicians talk about issues can already subtly alter perceptions of ‘innocent’ citizens has alarmed the general public and sparked extensive scientific research. However, considerable conceptual ambiguity has prevented academic work from fully addressing these concerns. This has led to an exaggerated public perception of the power of framing compared to what empirical studies typically demonstrate.

My dissertation addresses this conceptual ambiguity by critically examining one of the most prevalent frameworks in framing research, developed by James N. Druckman, and empirically applying it to a highly politicized subject field: the perceptions of refugees’ deservingness. Druckman distinguishes between *frames in communication*, *frames in thought* and *framing effects*, and I address each of these parts with an original empirical study. The studies and their insights together inform the more general discussion of Druckman’s framework. Also, the studies investigate both the supply-side of such frames, the political elite, and the demand-side, average citizens.

Study 1 addresses *Frames in Communication*. It considers how a focusing event, ‘New Year’s Eve 2015/16 in Germany’, affected politicians’ framing of refugees’ deservingness. To explain these reactions, I apply office-seeking and policy-seeking perspectives to a newly created data set. This consists of over 4,600 social media posts from German politicians in which frames of refugees’ deservingness were manually annotated. Both descriptive and analytical results find that the focusing event had only a limited impact on the elite political discourse. However, when politicians changed their framing of refugees, I explain this by office-seeking intentions. This study is the first empirical contribution of a large-scale annotated data set of deservingness frames on refugees by the political elite. In addition, the study extends the understanding of political elite behavior by highlighting the role of frames on negative reciprocity, rather than on need or universalism.

Study 2 informs the discussion of Druckman’s *Frames in Thought*. It examines German citizens’ perceptions of refugees’ deservingness from a gender perspective, using gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism as an explanatory approach. In an original factorial survey experiment, my coauthors and I show that male refugees are more likely to be ‘punished’ for showing less effort to find work than female refugees. Also, expectations on prior education are lower for female than for male refugees. These results confirm our suppositions. Overall,

the study adds to the literature on deservingness perceptions and highlights gender as a key determinant for the differential treatment of refugees.

Study 3 revisits gender stereotypes and utilizes these to contribute to the understanding of *Framing Effects*. It examines how gender stereotypes in communication can lead to longer-lasting framing effects because frame recipients engage in applicability considerations of the stereotypical frame. For this test, I designed a large-scale, multi-step survey experiment that measured how both a 'stereotypical frame' and an additional 'equivalence frame' impacted respondents, both immediately after treatment and up to two weeks later. Results provide a multilayered picture. At first, no stereotypical framing effects are identified. This changes, however, when prior-held stereotypes, as a cognitive schema that assists the admission of the frame, are introduced as moderator. The study thus advances the understanding of the mechanisms behind framing effects and emphasizes the importance of considering real-world contexts in framing effect studies.

Based on the insights of the three studies, I offer recommendations to refine Druckman's framework. These aim to enhance its conceptual clarity, including distinguishing framing and framing effects from other related mechanisms. By doing so, I seek to foster a more accurate and measured understanding of framing's true impact, both in academic circles and in the broader public discourse.

Zusammenfassung

‘Framing’ ist ein kommunikatives Werkzeug, das verwendet wird, um ein Thema in einem bestimmten Licht darzustellen. Die Vorstellung, dass bereits geringfügige Änderungen in der Art und Weise, wie ‘berechnende’ Politiker:innen über Themen sprechen, die Wahrnehmung ‘unschuldiger’ Bürger:innen subtil verändern können, hat die breite Öffentlichkeit alarmiert und umfangreiche wissenschaftliche Forschung angestoßen. Aufgrund erheblicher konzeptioneller Unklarheiten ist es der akademischen Arbeit bisher noch nicht gelungen, diese Bedenken vollständig auszuräumen. Dies hat zu einer überzogenen öffentlichen Wahrnehmung der Macht des Framings geführt, die weit über das hinausgeht, was empirische Studien normalerweise nachweisen können.

Meine Dissertation befasst sich mit diesen konzeptionellen Unklarheiten, indem sie eines der am weitesten verbreiteten Modelle der Framing-Forschung, entwickelt von James N. Druckman, kritisch untersucht und es empirisch auf ein hoch politisiertes Themenfeld anwendet: die Wahrnehmung der ‚Deservingness‘ von Geflüchteten. Druckman unterscheidet zwischen *Frames in Kommunikation*, *Frames im Denken* und *Framing-Effekten* (deutsche, sinngemäße Übersetzung, *Anm. d. Verf.*), und ich behandle jeden dieser Teile mit einer eigenständigen empirischen Studie. Die drei Studien und ihre Erkenntnisse tragen zusammen zur allgemeinen Diskussion von Druckmans Modell bei. Dabei untersuchen die Studien sowohl die Angebotsseite solcher Frames – die politische Elite – als auch die Nachfrageseite – den ‚normalen‘ Bürger.

Studie 1 behandelt *Frames in Kommunikation*. Sie untersucht, wie ein fokussierendes Ereignis, die ‚Kölner Silvesternacht 2015/16 in Deutschland’, beeinflusst hat, wie Politiker:innen die ‚Deservingness‘ von Geflüchteten framen. Um kommunikative Reaktionen zu erklären, wende ich die theoretischen Ansätze der ‚Office-seeking‘ und ‚Policy-seeking‘ Motivationen von Politiker:innen auf einen eigens erstellten Datensatz an. Dieser besteht aus über 4.600 Social-Media-Posts von deutschen Politiker:innen, in denen Frames über die Deservingness von Geflüchteten manuell annotiert wurden. Sowohl deskriptive als auch analytische Ergebnisse zeigen, dass das fokussierende Ereignis nur begrenzte Auswirkungen auf den politischen Eliten-Diskurs hatte. Wenn Politiker:innen jedoch ihr Framing von Geflüchteten änderten, erkläre ich dies durch ‚office-seeking‘ Absichten. Diese Studie ist der erste empirische Beitrag eines groß angelegten annotierten Datensatzes von Deservingness-Frames auf Geflüchtete durch die politische Elite. Darüber hinaus erweitert die Studie das Verständnis des Verhaltens

der politischen Elite, indem sie die Rolle von Frames auf negative Gegenseitigkeit hervorhebt, anstatt auf Bedürftigkeit oder Universalismus.

Studie 2 trägt zur Diskussion von Druckmans *Frames im Denken* bei. Sie untersucht die Wahrnehmungen deutscher Bürger:innen zur Deservingness von Geflüchteten aus einer Gender-perspektive, wobei geschlechtsspezifische Stereotype und wohlwollender Sexismus als Erklärungsansatz herangezogen werden. In einem eigenständigen faktoriellen Umfrageexperiment zeigen meine Co-Autor:innen und ich, dass männliche Geflüchtete eher 'bestraft' werden, wenn sie weniger Anstrengungen unternehmen, Arbeit zu finden, als weibliche Geflüchtete. Auch die Erwartungen an die vorherige Bildung sind für weibliche Geflüchtete geringer als für männliche. Diese Ergebnisse bestätigen unsere Annahmen. Insgesamt trägt die Studie zur Literatur der Wahrnehmung von Deservingness bei und hebt das Geschlecht als einen wichtigen Faktor für die unterschiedliche Behandlung von Geflüchteten hervor.

Studie 3 greift geschlechtsspezifische Stereotype wieder auf und nutzt diese, um zum Verständnis von *Framing-Effekten* beizutragen. Sie untersucht, wie geschlechtsspezifische Stereotype in der Kommunikation zu länger anhaltenden Framing-Effekten führen können, da die Rezipient:innen des Frames Überlegungen zur Anwendbarkeit des stereotypischen Frames anstellen. Um dies zu testen habe ich ein groß angelegtes, mehrstufiges Umfrageexperiment entworfen, das misst, wie sowohl ein 'stereotypischer Frame' als auch ein zusätzlicher 'Äquivalenz-Frame' die Befragten sowohl unmittelbar nach der Behandlung als auch bis zu zwei Wochen später beeinflussen. Die Ergebnisse liefern ein vielschichtiges Bild. Zunächst werden keine unmittelbaren stereotypischen Framing-Effekte festgestellt. Dies ändert sich jedoch, wenn bereits vorhandene Stereotype als kognitives Schema, das die Annahme des Frames unterstützt, als Moderator eingeführt werden. Die Studie vertieft das Verständnis der Mechanismen hinter Framing-Effekten und betont die Bedeutung der Berücksichtigung realer Kontexte in Studien zu Framing-Effekten.

Auf der Grundlage der Erkenntnisse der drei Studien mache ich einige Vorschläge, um Druckmans Modell zu verfeinern. Diese zielen darauf ab, seine konzeptionelle Klarheit zu verbessern, einschließlich der Unterscheidung zwischen Framing und Framing-Effekten von anderen verwandten Mechanismen. Auf diese Weise versuche ich, ein genaueres und ausgewogeneres Verständnis der tatsächlichen Auswirkungen von Framing sowohl in akademischen Kreisen als auch im öffentlichen Diskurs zu fördern.

1. Introduction – Framing and Dissertation Context

Framing, as a process of representing a particular issue in a certain light, bears considerable importance in the political sphere: In communication between politicians and the wider public, dominant frames of one side effect opinions of the other side. For instance, the extremely broad issue of refugee acceptance in Germany may be framed – and predominantly viewed – as a question of moral integrity, mandating universalist support measures and a lenient handling of admissions (compare Helbling, 2014). Alternatively, it may be framed – and predominantly viewed – as a challenge to a public administration that faces practical limits to what it can realistically achieve (compare Palmer, 2018). Each frame may produce a different reaction of the government to the problem; and each reaction will necessitate accompanying justifications by the responsible politicians, who will attempt to improve the public's opinion on their policy through appropriate framing (König, 2019; Krzyżanowski, 2013). At the same time, also the mass media and the broader public on social media will constantly provide their own framing of issues at hand. Their frames will likewise affect public opinion, as well as the opinion of the governing political elite (Barberá et al., 2019). What is more, prominent frames and changes of these provide an interesting track record and momentary representations of the advancement of the public debate and of political opinions on an issue (e.g., Bennett, 2018). In all of these capacities, such frames *in communication* are important components of the relationship between the public and the political elite and therefore warrant scientific attention.

Beyond that, framing also requires scrutiny from a normative democratic point of view: The fact that the political elite provides frames in communication which impact public opinion has often been viewed negatively and equated with demagoguery and manipulation (Chong and Druckman, 2007c). Therefore, much scientific attention has been paid to finding out how powerful and enduring framing effects really are (for an overview, see Amsalem and Zoizner, 2022). Framing effects have been investigated across a wide range of subjects, including:

- the classic example of a 'new illness' or 'Asian disease' (Tversky and Kahneman, 1981),
- hate group rallies (Chong and Druckman, 2007c; Sniderman and Theriault, 2004),

- the European Union enlargement (Lecheler and Vreese, 2011),
- immigration policy and refugees (Aarøe, 2011; Bechtel et al., 2015; Merolla et al., 2013),
- recent studies on framing during the COVID-19 crisis (Kulin and Johansson Sevä, 2024),
- and questions of the environment (Detenber et al., 2018; Ho, 2021).

Among these diverse issues, the framing of immigrants and refugees is of particular importance, as it pertains to a societal minority group with pronounced vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities are significant because refugees and immigrants often have to fulfill considerable requirements and endure drawn-out periods of waiting time while their requests are decided upon (for Germany, see BAMF, 2023a). During this time, they are not allowed to participate in the labor market and, for instance in Germany, live off of state subsidies that lie below the level of (minimum) unemployment benefits. These circumstances may exacerbate the already widespread unpopularity of asylum seekers (Diehl et al., 2020) and they can lead to stereotypes, such as the belief that immigrants violate dominant norms of work ethics (Myers et al., 2024). Such stereotypes, in turn, can entail a range of negative consequences, including hate speech and even physical violence against migrants and refugees, further reinforcing the inequalities they face (Kopytowska and Baider, 2017). These consequences on their own would already warrant scrutiny. Against the backdrop that perceptions of inequalities, much as stereotypes and prejudices, are often separated from the actual distribution of resources and the actual state of things (e.g., Bartels, 2016), this endeavor becomes only more pressing. Thus, this dissertation contributes to the debate of framing in political science. Specifically, I ask: How are such frames constructed? Which precise frames do political actors apply to represent the minority group of refugees and related inequalities? And, do these frames actually influence public opinion and if so, in what ways?

This dissertation applies one single, detailed conceptualization of frames and framing. This becomes inevitable due to the plethora of definitions, conceptualizations and understandings of frames and framing in the scientific literature, that have come up in the last forty years (for one detailed account of definitions see Druckman, 2001b). Including all of them would have been impossible. The chosen approach plays a significant role in framing research, particularly within the field of political communication. By comprehensively presenting, carefully applying, and then critically evaluating it, the dissertation adds to a concise part of the overall framing literature. Such an effort can contribute to a well-needed harmonization of the field on this,

already for a long time, “fractured paradigm” (Entman, 1993). What is more, framing as a phenomenon has gained prominence even in the broader public debate. A clearer delimitation of its components and a better understanding of its effects can help to assess its true relevance. Also, it can potentially sooth some of the suspicions raised toward a would-be manipulation of citizens’ opinion formation through framing.

The conceptualizations applied and discussed in this dissertation are those submitted by the political scientist James N. Druckman. Druckman is particularly interested in the mechanics of human preference formation and communication. Building on social psychological conceptualizations of preference formation (especially Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980), he bridges different literatures. His ideas are informed by the fields of psychology and sociology (especially Entman, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, 1989; Goffman, 1974; Pan and Kosicki, 1993; Tversky and Kahneman, 1981) and he comprehensively introduces his definitions of frames and framing effects to the field of political science. As a result, his work has become highly influential in the field and his definitions are broadly applied (for reviews of framing studies see Amsalem and Zoizner, 2022; König, 2019). Especially in cooperation with Dennis Chong, he has himself contributed a considerable number of framing effect studies (among others, Chong and Druckman, 2007a, 2007b, 2010; Druckman et al., 2010; Druckman and Nelson, 2003).

Arguably, one of the greatest strengths of his contribution lies in his conceptual distinction between mainly two different frames – *frames in communication* and *frames in thought* – and their coming together as framing effects. With this distinction, Druckman links work on frames in texts and the media to framing effects that occur in individuals’ thought. Albeit not entirely clear-cut, his distinction is important because it delineates and connects two essential components of frames and framing that had already been identified by other literatures. Also, it provides a comprehensive account of different kinds of effects and components that revolve around the overarching and ambiguous concept of framing.

Given his encompassing framework, it is surprising that its three separate components have not yet been examined and empirically evaluated *in conjunction*. Instead, focus has mostly been on its individual parts (particularly on *frames in communication* and *framing effects*, see Amsalem and Zoizner, 2022; König, 2019). This lack of integration is likely due to the myriad of framing definitions across various disciplines, which complicates the simultaneous analysis of all three aspects of Druckman’s framework. However, particularly for this reason, it appears worthwhile to consider his framework in its entirety. Druckman’s broad conceptualizations aim to remedy

some of the complexities within the framing literature, and taking his approach seriously could further this effort. Also, as I discuss below, the components of Druckman's framework interact significantly with one another, making a unified discussion of these elements all the more compelling.

However, the dissertation does not only contribute to the framing literature. Framing as a means of processing information can be applied to any kind of subject issue. For the dissertation, I decided to explore all aspects of the framing process on the same issue. This approach has two main advantages: Firstly, by conducting framing effect studies (Chapters 3 and 4) based on real-world frames from actual political communication (Chapter 2), the realism of the conducted studies is significantly enhanced, which in turn increases their external validity. Although I did not utilize the exact same formulations because it was necessary to trim frames according to the needs of the executed experiments, I am confident that the utilized frames are realistic enough so that my results can be transferred to the actual debate taking place on the issue. Secondly, underlying processes and conceptualizations of opinion formation, e.g., stereotyping and frames in thought, are extremely difficult to measure (see below). It is therefore reasonable to build upon the studies sequentially in order to leverage their findings (especially Chapters 3 and 4).

The issue chosen for this dissertation is the framing of refugees' deservingness in Germany. As the broader public debate shows, and as I expound in the following, this is a particularly multifaceted issue: It speaks to the wider scientific discussion on deservingness perceptions in general, but also informs the debate on gender, identity and ethnicity/race, seeing that refugees can be considered from all of these perspectives. Simultaneously, class components can be found in the debate, because refugees often require welfare benefits and can therefore be seen as competition for other recipients of state subsidies. Additionally, the issue echoes larger geopolitical problems, keeping in mind the reasons individuals decide to flee their homes.

Refugees and immigration are also a highly relevant and salient issue that regularly plays an important role in elections: For the year 2024 and the US elections in November, immigration was cited by 57% of respondents in a study by the Pew Research Center as a topic that should be a top priority for the administration (Pew Research Center, 2024). In another study, it was indicated as the most important issue heading into the 2024 presidential election among republican voters (Gallant, 2024). Also in the European Parliament elections of 2024, immigration was highly important for voters in Germany (tagesschau.de and infratest dimap, 2024), and beyond (Hoppmann, 2024).

Further, the issue pertains to different aspects of inequality – be it class-based (between different recipients of welfare benefits (Esmark and Schoop, 2017; Hänig, 2019)), identity-based (between the native population and newcomers, or between different ethnic groups (Haiges, 2023; Jansesberger, 2024; Zuber, 2022)) or gender-based (see Chapter 3 below on benevolent and hostile sexism). These inequalities can be framed as grievances and therefore lend themselves to mobilization efforts by political actors (for mobilization on the issue in Germany in relation to the AfD and the BSW see Arzheimer and Berning, 2019, Thomeczek, 2024; for mobilization online see Gremler, 2023; Gremler and Weidmann, 2024). Welfare benefits to immigrants and refugees fall into the more general domain of social protection and the welfare state. Over the past decades, the latter has experienced considerable reconstruction and retrenchment and has become more conditional and selective (Jochem, 2018; Reeskens and van der Meer, 2020; Slothuus, 2007; van Oorschot, 2000). With these developments, the public debate has shifted (back) to the basic welfare question of 'who should get what, and why' and evaluations of target groups' deservingness have (re-)gained importance (van Oorschot, 2000, 2006). Given the overall issue's potential for mobilization by political actors and reflective of the ongoing public debate, it appears particularly necessary to investigate the usage and effectiveness of deservingness frames in this context.

The salience of the question of refugees' deservingness entails two main advantages to the study of framing on the issue: For one, because there is a considerable discussion on refugees in terms of their deservingness, there is ample real-world framing material to study (see Chapter 2). As political actors from different parties engage in deservingness framing, considerable variance lends itself for analyses. And for another, with the issue being important to broad parts of the population, many aspects of it are well-known to the public. This is important because a prominent difficulty in framing research pertains to the distinction of framing and information effects. If an issue is highly salient to much of the population, it is more easy to design frames in a survey experiment in such a way, that one can reasonably expect respondents to be aware of the information that frames necessarily provide (see Chapter 4).

High salience, however, also entails the (potential) drawback that recipients have been shown to be less affected by frames on highly salient issues, on which they already hold strong opinions (Chong and Druckman, 2010). For framing effect studies on a high-salience issue, this necessitates that any frames presented to citizens and survey respondents have to be particularly strong to exhibit a (measurable) framing effect. A discussion of this fact and how it impacted results is presented in Chapter 4.

Finally, there were several reasons for choosing to explore the framing of refugees' deservingness in the context of Germany. Firstly, within Europe, Germany has been one of the countries with the highest total intake of refugees, both in the wake of the Syrian civil war and the 'Arab Spring' (especially in 2015), as well as following the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine that began in 2022 (see Eurostat, 2016). These events triggered all kinds of controversial public debates, including on refugees' deservingness of public welfare (see for instance Attewell, 2021; Brandis, 2022; Czymara and van Klingeren, 2021; Focus, 2022). Discussions thereby received an additional component by the fact that in 2022 – in contrast to 2015 – mainly female refugees from Ukraine came to Germany (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2022). How gender perceptions interact with deservingness evaluations of refugees is the focus of the empirical study in Chapter 3. Another reason in favor of this study context is the fact that Germany's welfare system has more elements of a contribution-based than of a solidarity-based system (Leitner and Lessenich, 2003). This, and other institutional specificities, make it particularly likely for reciprocity-based arguments of deservingness to play an important role for public opinion during welfare benefit negotiations in Germany (see also Larsen, 2008). Germany covers a middle-ground between the different welfare systems in Europe and other global welfare states. In Germany, deservingness frames are thus likely to be highly prevalent and salient. Accordingly, the above-mentioned advantages – as well as the difficulty of salient frames – apply.

The following sub-chapter (1.1) provides an in-depth discussion of Druckman's conceptualizations of frames and framing, situating them within the broader academic literature. Only after thoroughly examining these conceptualizations can their application in the three empirical studies of this dissertation be detailed (Sub-Chapter 1.2). This is because the three main aspects of the conceptual framework are closely interlinked, and some of the studies address more than one of them. The next sub-chapter (1.3) then synthesizes the contributions of these applications to the understanding of framing and offers recommendations for future research. After this thorough conceptual discussion, the three empirical studies are introduced (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), each providing unique insights into their respective fields while further advancing the understanding of framing.

1.1 Frames in Communication, Frames in Thought and Framing Effects

Druckman's work builds on a substantial tradition of research on framing[1], yet it has also laid the groundwork for many contemporary scientific advancements, especially in the field of political communication (see, for instance, Amsalem and Zoizner, 2022; Knapp et al., 2022; Olsen, 2020). One of his most important contributions in taking up previous literature and developing own conceptualizations of frames and framing is the distinction of three key elements: '*Frames in Communication*', '*Frames in Thought*', and '*Framing Effects*'. This differentiation has allowed the scientific literature to more precisely identify which aspect of framing they address, and progress in each of the three areas. The following sections introduce each element in turn.

1.1.1 Frames in Communication

According to Druckman, *Frames in Communication* are, first of all, "verbal or non-verbal statement[s] that place clear emphasis on particular considerations" (Druckman, 2011, p. 283). This definition is in line with earlier definitions of framing (e.g., Entman, 1993, p. 52) and addresses the core of how later scholars have defined such frames (*in communication*; Matthes, 2012, p. 249; Vreese, 2012). However, Druckman and colleague contend that the definition lacks precision, which leads to the common issue in the field that types of frames are too easily 'identified' (Chong and Druckman, 2011; see discussion below).

Druckman (2011) attempts to delimit frames in communication by highlighting that the placement of 'clear emphasis' distinguishes these from other types of communication, such as "factual statements" (p. 283). He also asserts that frames in communication are not defined by the effect they may or may not have on recipients.[2] In parts, such a distinction is necessary because other textual elements, which are not classified as frames in communication, may still cause framing effects (ibid.; Slothuus, 2008). Druckman, albeit not explicitly, seems to differentiate between frames in communication and these other elements. These latter elements have been called 'framing devices', and they also contribute to the overall persistence of concepts and central organizing ideas (Nisbet, 2010; van Gorp, 2010). With his differentiation,

[1] For some early differentiations of frames in thought and frames in communication see, i.a., Kinder and Sanders (1996); Scheufele (1999).

[2] This assertion deviates from how, for instance, Entman (1993) conceptualizes frames. For him, frames have several functions and text fragments that fulfil these functions can help identify frames in communication (compare Helbling, 2014; Zuber 2022).

Druckman departs from some of his colleagues, most notably Entman (1993). According to the latter, frames in communication become manifest in

> "the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgements" (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

This implies that already very short text snippets – and also Druckman's factual statements – could, for Entman, constitute full frames in communication. This is at odds with Druckman's understanding.

Druckman thus proposes a narrower understanding of frames in communication. However, this narrow definition presents a considerable difficulty: What constitutes 'clear emphasis' in absolute terms? How should, as example, the sentence "Most refugees from Ukraine are female" be understood? As a factual statement? Or rather as a frame in communication, because it places 'clear emphasis' on the gender of Ukrainian refugees? Or, given some more context, couldn't the same sentence also be understood as highlighting the nationality of female refugees? For instance, if the sentence were given as an answer to the question "Did you say most refugees from Syria are female?"?

Druckman's definition of frames in communication thus cannot provide a good explanation of what is *not* considered a frame in communication. If, however, then every verbal or non-verbal statement could constitute a frame in communication, this would suggest that 'one cannot not frame' (compare Watzlawick, 1967). But if this were the case, what would then be the use of the concept of frames in communication, or shouldn't we get rid of it altogether (Cacciatore et al., 2016)? To address this difficulty, several ideas on how to better delimit frames in communication from other text fragments have come up. Druckman only discusses these to a limited extent, but it is worth reviewing them to reach a more informed conceptualization of frames in communication that can help enhance Druckman's definition.

The first of these ideas considers the question whether frames in communication address higher order frames of reference in an *inter-subjectively intelligible* way. This possible solution arises because objective rules for demarcation are missing. Instead, a collaborative effort by a group of human coders might be able to identify frames in communication effectively. [3] This idea is

[3] Attempts to find such rules that could, for example, then be applied computationally, are discussed by Matthes and Kohring (2008). Also, as a step further, subjectively identified frames can then be taken as basis for attempting to filter out objective markers of frames in communication. This was one approach tested in a broader project this

also supported by Entman (1993), who contends that frames are nested in – among other things – both the text *and* the receiver of the frame (p. 52). If frames in communication are nested within frame recipients, but cannot be defined solely by the effects they produce (as discussed above), then their *potential* to cause framing effects might be the key distinguishing factor that human coders could identify.

Inter-subjectively reliable coding of frames in communication is already a commonly accepted approach for identifying frames in communication. Methods include both the inductive recognition of frames in communication, as well as an a priori deduction of higher-order frames of reference from theory, from which matching frames in communication are then manually extracted from texts (for discussions of the different procedures see Chong and Druckman, 2011 and van Gorp, 2010). But while the different methods do their best to reduce subjectivity in frame identification – considerable emphasis is put on inter-coder reliability (Chong and Druckman, 2011) and as distinct as possible coding-instructions (van Gorp, 2010) – they have yet to answer the question of what does *not* constitute a frame in communication. An empirical proposition for how intersubjective coding can support the theorization of frames in communication and circumvent the difficulty of defining what does *not* constitute a frame in communication is applied in Study 1 (Chapter 2) and discussed in Section 1.2.1 below.

As inter-subjective identification is a common, but still not definitive method to clearly delineate frames in communication, the second idea to do so builds on how other concepts of speech are distinguished, namely primes, cues and arguments. Druckman (2011) and Chong and Druckman (2007c) broadly address these concepts which many scholars consider distinct from frames in communication. If these concepts are indeed distinct, however, then understanding them could help in defining what frames in communication are *not*. Thus they are briefly outlined.

Unfortunately, Druckman's discussions on primes and arguments focus more on the outcomes they produce – priming effects and persuasion – rather than the forms they take in communication. As such, they do not aid in distinguishing frames in communication in this chapter. Instead, I will address these aspects in relation to framing effects in Section 1.1.3.

Cues, or, to mirror Druckman, 'cues in communication', are somewhat different: Cues in communication are understood – by Druckman and others – to be bits of information that let

dissertation is a part of. My efforts together with linguist Qi Yu, however, failed: no linguistic patterns could be deduced from the manually coded frames in communication from 2, discussed in Chapter 2.

individuals draw inferences on a certain issue without providing more detailed information (for a lengthy discussion see Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). In this very broad definition, frames in communication can also be considered examples of cues in communication, as they emphasize certain information that may likewise be used by individuals to jump to further conclusions without additional details (Druckman et al., 2010). Thus, the two considerably overlap and the definition of cues cannot help to better identify and differentiate frames in communication. However, Druckman et al. (2010) also discuss cue *effects*, which are noteworthy in comparison to framing *effects*. These are further explored in Section 1.1.3.

Summing up, clearly distinguishing what frames in communication are and what they are *not*, poses a substantial problem to Druckman and the broader literature. Human comprehension thereby represents one approach to address this difficulty, distinguishing frames in communication from other methods of communication represents another. Because there are considerable problems with regard to both, comparing *framing effects* to other communication effects – e.g., priming, cue effects or persuasion – might provide an alternative pathway to reach an understanding of what frames in communication are. Before contemplating framing effects, however, the second dimension of frames, namely *Frames in Thought*, has to be introduced.

1.1.2 Frames in Thought

A *Frame in Thought*, sometimes also referred to as "frame of mind" (Chong and Druckman, 2007a, p. 101; Druckman, 2011, p. 281), is defined as "an individual's (cognitive) understanding of a given situation" (Druckman, 2001b, pp. 227–228). According to Druckman, it comprises all aspects that an individual deems relevant when forming an opinion on an issue (or object). This understanding comes from a theory of preference and attitude formation, which posits that attitudes or opinions on an issue are the sum of evaluations (v) of attributes (i) of that issue, multiplied with the salience weights (w) attributed to the individual attributes (Druckman, 2011, p. 280, based on Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010, p. 97):

$$Attitude = \Sigma [v_i * w_i]$$

For instance, an opinion of a person x on whether an individual refugee y deserves support would be formed by evaluating and weighting some known characteristics of y: If y fled from war and x considers fleeing due to war a 'good reason', y's reason for fleeing might be positively evaluated ($v_{\text{reason of flight}}$ ~ good evaluation) and weighted highly ($w_{\text{reason of flight}}$ ~ high). At the same time, if x deems job training less relevant for assessing y's deservingness, the weight of this characteristic might be low (w_{training} ~ low), even if y's job training were only

limited and therefore evaluated negatively by x ($v_{training}$ ~ low evaluation). The overall opinion would then be formed by summing up the different aspects and their respective evaluations and weights:

$$X\text{'s opinion on y's deservingness of support} = [v_{\text{y's reason of flight}} * w_{\text{y's reason of flight}}] + [v_{\text{y's training}} * w_{\text{y's training}}]$$

The frame in thought, in this example, would then only be the attributes (i) of the issue at stake taken together (Druckman, 2011), i.e., Σ [reason of flight, training]. Other characteristics of y that were not included in the opinion formation process, for example, y's gender, would not be part of x's frame in thought.

With this understanding of frames in thought, Druckman diverges from another commonly referenced definition which explains a frame to be "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, p. 143 as cited in Cacciatore et al., 2016, p. 10). In this definition, in the above-given example, job training, or perhaps the related concept of employability, would be considered a frame for depicting a refugee's deservingness. Another frame might be the reason for flight and the concept of 'war refugees'. Rather than being seen as a mix of various considerations with elements of multiple characteristics, frames would be understood as individual ideas or concepts, in contrast to Druckman's broader interpretation. Despite being distinct, Druckman himself sometimes approaches this more narrow understanding. For instance, when discussing opinion formation regarding a hate group rally, he notes that an individual for whom "free speech dominates all other consideration" (Druckman, 2011, p. 281) is in a free speech frame of mind. However, this conclusion is somewhat inaccurate, seeing that free speech only *dominates* other considerations but is not the only one. Instead, the frame of mind should encompass the entire mix of different considerations. This noteworthy distinction is crucial, because Druckman's original conceptualization makes it easier to define framing effects (see Section 1.1.3). The other common definition, however, depicts frames in thought and frames in general as something original, that is separable from, for example, an overall mindset. It simplifies recording what precisely a frame in thought is, e.g., an 'employability frame in thought'. Further advantages of this latter and difficulties of Druckman's former conceptualization are discussed further below (Sections 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 and Sub-Chapter 1.3).

For the time being, three features of the attributes that together form a frame in thought must be described, to fully understand Druckman's conceptualization of the latter (see also

Druckman and Lupia, 2000). This is important because these features form the basis for a wider discussion of how precisely framing effects occur (see Sections 1.1.3 and 1.2.3). For an attribute of an issue to be considered, it has to be i) *available,* ii) *accessible* and iii) *applicable*, meaning that

> i) it must be stored in the memory of an individual, so that it is available for cognitive retrieval when the individual forms an attitude on the issue;
>
> ii) it must have crossed a cognitive "activation threshold" (p. 284) of an individual, so that the individual takes it into account when forming the attitude;
>
> iii) it is perceived by the individual to be relevant for opinion formation (Druckman, 2011).

As an example, if an individual were not aware that refugees in Germany receive financial support from the state, s/he might not consider financial expenses of a state when forming an opinion on whether refugees should be allowed to stay in the country. Because these considerations were not *available*, other attributes, for instance cultural similarities and differences, might make up that individual's frame in thought on their own. If an individual were aware of the support Germany grants to refugees, but might not think about this aspect in that moment – perhaps because s/he were part of a focus group on cultural differences – this aspect would not be part of the frame in thought because it was not *accessed*. Finally, if an individual were, for example, forming an attitude on the religious rights of refugees, references to welfare system costs would simply not be relevant, i.e., not *applicable*.

Every aspect (i) of an issue has to be available, accessible and applicable to be employed when forming an opinion. These three features are also impacted when framing effects occur. How this is the case and how precisely Druckman defines framing effects is described in the following section.

1.1.3 Framing Effects

Framing Effects, according to Druckman (2011), transpire when a frame in communication affects a frame in thought. Within his formal model, this involves that a frame in communication alters the relative importance of as few as two aspects with an individual's frame in thought. More precisely, in Druckman's terms, the weights (w_i) of at least two of the

attributes (i) that form the frame in thought must be modified (Chong and Druckman, 2007c, pp. 115–116; Nelson and Oxley, 1999).[4]

It is noteworthy that, according to Druckman, framing effects operate solely through changing the weights of considerations and not their evaluation. Within his formal model, any alteration in the evaluation component (v_i) of a consideration is classified as persuasion, which he distinguishes from framing effects (Chong and Druckman, 2007a, 2007c; Druckman, 2011; see also Entman, 1993). Persuasion thereby occurs through the provision of new information.

However, since scientific studies only measure attitudes, empirically distinguishing between the preceding two processes that have produced attitude change – framing and persuasion – is challenging. Perhaps due to this difficulty, Druckman and his colleague are not always entirely precise in their own use of the term 'persuasion'. In Chong and Druckman (2007a) and Chong and Druckman (2010), for example, all forms of attitude change are sometimes labeled as persuasion, even those involving changes in weighting components. Also, frames of varying strengths are described as having different degrees of *persuasiveness*. This blurs the lines between framing effects and persuasion, highlighting the importance of attempting to empirically distinguish between attitude changes that result from persuasion versus those from framing effects. A suggestion for how to achieve this is discussed later in this section.

As to the precise mechanism, by which the weight of one or more aspects of the frame in thought is altered, Druckman argues within his psychological model of frames in thought that any change in either the availability, the accessibility, or the applicability of an aspect of an attitude produces a framing effect (Chong and Druckman, 2007c). In other words, the emphasis provided by a frame in communication either adds a new aspect to the existing considerations within a frame in thought, makes an available consideration become more accessible, or increases the applicability of a particular consideration. Naturally, with this definition, not all framing effects are measurable. Even small changes in, for instance, the accessibility of one particular aspect of an issue would theoretically constitute a framing effect. However, such

[4] Druckman does not explicitly assert that at least two weights must be modified in a frame in thought, but this can be logically inferred: For instance, in the above example, consider that x's frame in thought on refugee y's deservingness is based on y's reason for flight and job training. If the reason for flight is weighted more heavily, the overall frame in thought might consist of 70% consideration of reason for flight and 30% consideration of job training. If a frame in communication were now to increase the importance of the job training consideration, this would logically have to decrease the salience of the reason for flight consideration at the same time. For example, if job training is now weighted at 40%, importance of the reason for flight would necessarily decrease to 60%.

changes may not sufficiently alter the overall weighting of that aspect to the extent that they influence the overall attitude, which is what can be measured.

At the same time, changes in attitude may be called framing effects, even though they are based on other cognitive processes, for example persuasion (see above). One approach to measure framing effects and distinguish them from, e.g., persuasion is to apply only E*quivalence Frames* and not *Emphasis Frames*. Equivalence frames present logically equivalent information in different forms. Since the core information remains unchanged, when comparing individuals exposed to different yet equivalent frames, any observed effects should (ideally) be attributed solely to the framing effect rather than to changes in evaluation. A classic example of equivalence framing and its effects is Tversky and Kahneman's (1981) story of a 'new illness' and its potential cure. Broadly summarized, they demonstrated that support for the cure to a new illness varied depending on whether it was described as saving 200 out of 600 lives, or *not* saving 400 out of 600 lives. Because the information in both versions is identical, the evaluation of the cure should theoretically remain the same. Any change in opinion would then result from the emphasis placed on the (in-) effectiveness of the cure, and the shifting weight attributed to each side of the aspect 'effectiveness'. This would constitute a framing effect, and not persuasion.

By contrast, emphasis frames, sometimes also called *issue frames* (Slothuus, 2008), highlight thematically different frames of an overall issue. For instance, permitting or prohibiting the rally of a hate group could thereby either be framed as a free-speech issue, or one of public safety (Druckman, 2011). Although Druckman does not explicitly address this, such frames might be distinguishable from persuasion because the emphasis they provide focusses on considerations that are already known to individuals. Viewing the issue 'hate group rally' through the lens of free-speech, for example, could be very common and may not change the evaluation of this perspective but instead simply bring it to the forefront of consideration. However, this assumption is rarely made explicit, and what are assumed to be 'framing effects' could, in fact, be instances of persuasion: Some respondents might react particularly strongly to the free-speech frame due to a personal history of censorship, for example. They might not have previously thought that a hate group rally can also be considered as a free-speech issue. Due to the increased importance of the free-speech perspective, however, they might evaluate this perspective even more positively. As a result, a change in opinion could resemble persuasion rather than (only) a shift in salience of this one aspect of the overall issue.

Because of this difficulty, Cacciatore et al. (2016) argue for refocusing on a narrower understanding of framing around equivalence-based definitions. Only *how* information is presented, and not *what* an audience receives should be subject of framing research. Or, how Scheufele and Iyengar (2017) nicely put it: "unfortunately, (…) researchers have been studying paintings rather than frames" (p. 629).

However, equivalence frames appear to be much less represented in every-day communication. Or, at least to the best of my knowledge, it has not yet been attempted by researchers to extract these from any kinds of text sources, which indicates their somewhat reduced relevance (see also Cacciatore et al., 2016). A focus solely on equivalence frames and framing effects would exclude much of what has been considered framing effects in the past.

Therefore, it is worth exploring whether there is something else unique to framing effects that could set them apart from other cognitive processes that lead to changes in opinion. In this context, the above-described concepts of availability, accessibility, and applicability of issue aspects considered when forming an opinion become relevant. Unfortunately, however, Druckman's understanding of framing effects as encompassing any changes in availability, accessibility or applicability effectively conflates these with other effects described in psychological and communication literature – priming and cueing effects.

Druckman contends that priming effects, firstly, have been defined differently across disciplines. Among communication scholars, for one, "priming refers to changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations" (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987, p. 63). These changes are induced by the attention that is paid to certain matters by, e.g., the mass media (ibid.). The mere mention of a particular consideration can increase its accessibility, with the psychological process behind these changes of the standards of evaluation thereby relying on "accessibility as a heuristic device" (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987, p. 64). According to this definition, priming effects are essentially increases in accessibility and thus equate to (one kind of) framing effects (Druckman, 2011).

In the psychological literature, for another, priming is viewed as "a procedure that increases the accessibility of some category or construct in memory" (Sherman et al., 1990, p. 405). The procedure thus very much resembles the aforementioned one described by the communication literature[5] and Druckman concludes his discussion of priming and framing effects by conceding

[5] Druckman (2011) and Chong and Druckman (2007a, 2007c) are not explicit on this resemblance. However, their acknowledgement of this similarity can be inferred from their discussions on different definitions of priming (see, in particular, Druckman, Kuklinski, Sigelman, 2009).

that "the two terms can be used interchangeably" (Chong and Druckman, 2007c, p. 115 and Druckman, 2011, p. 287; see also Reitmann et al., 2020). What is more, Druckman, Kuklinski, Sigelman (2009) even question whether, in this understanding of priming, the concept is actually unique – disregarding the chronologically earlier appearance of priming than of framing in psychology literature. With regard to increases in accessibility, framing effects are thus not even distinguishable from priming effects.[6]

Cueing effects, secondly, occur when individuals "make inferences without drawing on more detailed knowledge" (Druckman et al., 2010, p. 137) based on a piece of information that acts as a cue. These cues in communication are, as mentioned earlier (Section 1.1.1), largely equivalent to frames in communication. However, Druckman does not further specify how overall attitudes are precisely affected by the inferences that individuals make based on cues. There are different ways this could occur. For example, if a Nobel laureate in Economics endorses an economic government program, this endorsement might *persuade* an individual to evaluate the program's effectiveness more positively, making the cueing effect resemble persuasion. Alternatively, if the Nobel laureate emphasizes the program's effectiveness, the individual might begin to consider the applicability of this aspect more in their overall consideration of the program. Then, the cuing effect would be equivalent to a framing effect by changing the applicability of specific considerations.[7]

To summarize this point, if one were to adhere to Druckman's definition, framing effects broadly overlap with both priming and cueing effects. To address this, again Cacciatore et al. (2016) advocate to return to a more narrow definition of framing effects. They argue that increases in salience, or accessibility as defined by Druckman, should be confined to priming effects (and agenda-setting effects, see footnote 6). Framing effects, according to their proposal, should specifically focus on changes in frames in thought through shifts in the applicability of considerations. The authors further explicate this mechanism: Frames in communication require

[6] In addition to priming effects, Druckman often discusses agenda setting and agenda-setting effects as closely related phenomena (Druckman, 2001a, 2001b; Chong and Druckman, 2007a, 2007c). Agenda setting effects occur when the fact that an issue or aspect of a larger issue is particularly emphasized (e.g., by a news outlet or politician), leads the audience to perceive that issue as particularly significant. Unlike priming, which involves an implicit increase in the accessibility of an issue, agenda setting drives changes in opinion through the explicit belief that the issue is of significant importance (see also Druckman, 2011; McCombs and Valenzuela, 2021). In Druckman's psychological model, agenda setting effects can thus be viewed as similar to framing effects because they alter the weight component of an issue's aspect (Druckman, 2001b). Druckman does not explicitly address the specific cognitive processes underlying this increase in weight. However, he suggests that agenda setting is similar to priming, implying that the underlying process might also involve increased accessibility. Therefore, agenda setting effects, like priming effects, can be considered a part of framing effects.

[7] Empirical cue effects are an important starting point for Study 3. Therefore, they are discussed in even broader detail below (see Chapter 4).

a fitting cognitive schema within individuals, and applicability considerations can only be applied to alter frames in thought if such a schema exists (Price and Tewksbury, 1997, see also Cacciatore et al., 2016). From this perspective, distinguishing framing effects from priming not only provides a clearer conceptual framework but also adds inherent scientific value (ibid.). Also, the mentioned 'fitting cognitive schemas' can serve as a starting point for distinctly identifying framing effects. An attempt to do so is presented in Study 3 of this dissertation (see Chapter 4) and its results are discussed in Section 1.2.3.

Taking the whole section together, eliciting and measuring framing effects presents certain difficulties. On the one hand, equivalence frames are superior to emphasis frames because they frame without providing new information and inducing persuasion. However, they are empirically much rarer. On the other hand, the precise mechanisms underlying framing effects – whether they involve changes in availability, accessibility or applicability – remain ambiguous, as they often overlap with priming and cueing effects.

Cacciatore et al. (2016) propose that the literature refocus on equivalence frames. However, how this matches with their other proposition – focusing on applicability-based framing mechanisms – is not clearly explained by the authors. Indeed, Druckman (2011) highlights a challenge with this combined focus: If individuals engage in applicability considerations about equivalence frames, any framing effects should dissolve. This is because individuals would recognize the mere variations in the presentations of the same information. If this holds true, then confining framing effect research to equivalence frames and applicability-driven processes might be futile.

Thus, certain difficulties of Druckman's conceptualizations of framing effects remain. Having explicated these issues, as well as those related to his views on frames in communication and frames in thought, I now explain how these issues were addressed in my three empirical studies. Additionally, the conclusions that can be drawn from these studies regarding Druckman's work will be discussed.

1.2 Empirical Applications of *Frames in Communication*, *Frames in Thought*, and *Framing Effects*

Each of my three studies specifically addresses one of Druckman's three components of framing. As mentioned above, framing as a type of communication always studies a substantive issue, and for all three studies in this dissertation, the issue in focus is the perception of refugees' deservingness in Germany. Hence, each study also contributes on this specific topic. Below, I provide brief summaries of the three studies, each in the section on the aspects of Druckman's framework that they address most directly. The main focus of the three sections is to elucidate the insights gained from empirically applying Druckman's framing conceptualizations, along with and discussing their associated advantages and challenges. The three individual studies then ensue in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

My first study, "Focusing Events and the Framing of Refugees' Deservingness – New Year's Eve 2015/16 in Germany and the Reaction of the Political Elite" identifies *frames in communication* on refugees' deservingness in Facebook and Twitter posts by politicians in Germany. It provides explanations for how politicians choose their communicative framing under specific circumstances and how these circumstances may or may not induce changes in framing. Also, it illustrates the difficulties of identifying frames in communication (Section 1.2.1). My second study, "Deservingness Perceptions Toward Refugees – A Gender Perspective", looks at different deservingness attributes and their effect on public perceptions of refugees' deservingness. It distinguishes the direct from the indirect effects the deservingness cues have on *frames in thought* and recognizes stereotyping as an additional pathway for *framing effects* to occur. Difficulties of Druckman's understanding of frames in thought are discussed in relation to this study (Section 1.2.2). My third study, "The Impact of Stereotypes on Framing Effect Duration", delves even deeper into *framing effects*. Building on findings from Study 2, it seeks to differentiate framing effects that emerge through applicability considerations from other kinds of framing effects (Section 1.2.3).

1.2.1 "Focusing Events and the Framing of Refugees' Deservingness" and *Frames in Communication*

Study 1 addresses focusing events and politicians' reactions to them. I investigate the reactions of a number of federal politicians in Germany to the events of New Year's Eve 2015/16 in Cologne and other German cities. The events mark a turning point in German public sentiment

toward refugees, following a tumultuous night with over 550 reported criminal offenses of sexual harassment, allegedly committed primarily by refugees. I adopt both office-seeking and policy-seeking perspectives to explain whether politicians changed their framing of refugees' deservingness as a reaction to the event. To measure reactions, I manually coded 4,639 Facebook and Twitter posts from the six months surrounding the event, quantitatively analyzing the frames in communication of deservingness applied to refugees. Results indicate that while the focusing event had minimal impact on elite political discourse, the few observed changes were driven by politicians' office-seeking goals. Apart from adding to the understanding of political behavior, the study provides and descriptively analyzes a valuable data set of actual deservingness frames on a salient minority group. The exercise of identifying these frames informs my discussion of Druckman's conceptualization of frames in communication.

As discussed above, in my case as well, the initial challenge for identifying frames in communication was determining what constitutes a (deservingness) frame in communication and, even more importantly, what does not. In practice, the rule followed by the student assistants that helped annotate the corpus and myself was that for a deservingness frame to be coded[8], an attribute of deservingness had to be present. As proposed by Chong and Druckman (2011), attributes of deservingness were deduced from theory. The attributes were those of the well-known CARIN principles scale of deservingness (Meuleman et al., 2020, based on van Oorschot, 2000). Overall deservingness theory seeks answers to the question at the heart of debates on the distribution of targeted welfare: 'Who should get What, and Why?' The CARIN principles scale sorts answers to these questions into five, more or less distinct categories, i.e., Control, Attitude, Reciprocity, Identity and Need. The ambiguities and the difficulties of distinguishing between these categories are discussed at length in both Studies 1 and 2.

For the annotation of deservingness attributes in the study, it was not fixed which word precisely indicated an attribute. Although the codebook provided examples of what constituted a frame in communication for each dimension, and certain words emerged as clear indicators of deservingness, the coding process largely relied on the coders' reading comprehension. This introduced subjectivity into the annotation process which was methodologically addressed in several ways: Firstly, as recommended by Chong and Druckman (2011), a theoretically deduced coding scheme was implemented. The scheme provided some important directions that guided annotators' efforts. Secondly, the analysis skills of coders for identifying deservingness frames

[8] In the following, the terms 'coding' and 'annotating', and 'coders' and 'annotators' are used analogously.

in communication were sharpened by rounds of training, conducted on a sample set of text. This was executed in two steps. At first, three researchers and myself developed the codebook by carefully attempting to identify attributes of deservingness and discussing our results at length. Thereupon, the precise instructions in the codebook on how to find these attributes in texts were specified (e.g., it was recorded that deservingness attributes could be self-assigned or ascribed by somebody else, see Appendix A.5 – The Codebook, p. 17). In a second step, four researchers who had not participated in the drafting of the original codebook were trained in several rounds of coding on test sets of posts. Thereby, controversial text snippets were discussed in the full team, in which an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect was maintained. Also, the team of researchers was selected to ensure balanced decisions, incorporating diverse perspectives on the issue (for example, a 50:50 gender ratio for annotators was maintained throughout the coding process, and student assistants were selected from different academic levels). This process resulted in, thirdly, an overall pairwise inter-coder reliability average of *Krippendorff's* $\alpha = 0.67$ for the four researchers and myself for all possible codes of the codebook (Krippendorff, 2009). Given the complexity of the task and the number of possible codes annotated (see Chapter 2 below, and Appendix A.5), this number was deemed as an adequate level of inter-subjectivity among annotators.

Through deducing the universe of possible deservingness frames in communication from theory, the issue of what would not be coded as a frame in communication was somewhat bypassed. Specifically, statements that did not include any attribute of deservingness were coded as '*no* deservingness frame' (with the code "not applicable"). Theoretically, these statements did *not* indicate the absence of *any* frame in communication, but rather the absence of deservingness frames specifically. The overall question of what precisely *no frame whatsoever in communication* could look like was thus not addressed.[9] Nevertheless, the initial decision to derive frames in communication of interest from theory at least enabled us to distinguish deservingness frames from non-deservingness frames.

An important takeaway from the study was that being guided by theory should not be understood too narrowly: A previously unidentified type of deservingness frame in communication was added inductively during the coding process. If we had focused solely on the frames in communication provided by the CARIN framework, we would have overlooked

[9] Additionally, at no point of the coding process did we specifically focus on those texts that did not contain deservingness frames. Thus, we did not identify patterns of 'non-deservingness frames' However, as mentioned in footnote 3 above, a later linguistic analysis of the annotated corpus from this study also did not reveal any noteworthy patterns.

this new frame. This would have been unfortunate because results indicated a considerable empirical relevance of the additional frame, thus making a noteworthy contribution. The new "legality argument" frame followed the same logic of a conditional provision of welfare benefits as the other deservingness frames and could therefore be annotated equivalently to the others. Thus, the overall theoretical model as starting point also informed the inductive part of the codebook creation. This procedure is therefore recommended for future studies as well.

A second challenge faced in Study 1 pertained to demarcating frames in communication from one another. This issue is inherent to the deservingness framework chosen for this study,[10] but also emphasizes the subjective dimension of frames in communication and can inform the debate on it. To address this in the study, annotators were permitted to code more than one deservingness frame per unit of analysis (a unit of analysis being at least one full sentence), if applicable. More precisely, after identifying a deservingness attribute, coders were required to consider all possible dimensions of deservingness and to decide whether to apply one or several of them. For instance, posts addressing refugee minors were regularly coded as pertaining each to the *need* dimension, the *control* dimension, and the *identity* dimension of deservingness: Firstly, often the *need* dimension was explicitly addressed in posts, but children were implicitly also considered as being in need of support due to their inherent dependency (on adults). This, secondly, automatically made them subject to the *control* dimension, because – in accordance to, e.g., much of the law in Germany – children were viewed as only conditionally independent. As such, children were often (explicitly or implicitly) considered as not responsible for their plights and therefore as deserving support because of a lack of control over their situations. And thirdly, children constitute a sub-group of refugees that can be clearly delimited. Therefore, and because this subgroup was sometimes described as being deserving of support regardless of any explicit reasons, posts could be interpreted as granting entitlement to minors solely based on their *identity* as members of this group.

As this example illustrates, even within an established theoretical framework it may be difficult to demarcate different issue dimensions – and frames – from one another. However, the example also reflects the subjective dimension of frames in communication: Refugee minors as

[10] Among scholars of deservingness and users of the CARIN criteria, there is consensus on a lack of theoretical and empirical distinctness of the concept (Knotz et al., 2022; Baute et al., 2021; Heuer and Zimmermann, 2020; Laenen et al., 2019). Indeed, several ideas for more discriminate definitions of categories of deservingness, as well as proposals for supplements to the CARIN criteria have been made (Knotz et al., 2022; Nielsen et al., 2020). I address this discussion in Study 1, for instance by integrating some of these additional criteria ('universalism' and 'rejectionism').

a framing device might imply need for some frame recipients. Others may be particularly aware of their helplessness and lack of control over their circumstances. Against this backdrop it appears impossible to objectively identify precise frames in communication. The same text can appear to emphasize different aspects for different recipients, seemingly 'clear emphasis' in a text also has a subjective component rooted in the frame recipient. Referring to frames in communication in absolute terms therefore appears inappropriate. Rather, some parts of texts seem to bear the potential of generating framing effects in some individuals. For such individuals, these parts of texts may emphasize specific considerations. Whether they result in a framing effect depends on the frame recipient – and should, at least for Druckman (2011), not be the basis for defining frames in communication.

Text fragments that bear the potential of generating framing effects are still scientifically interesting to analyze. Because they cannot be considered frames in communication straight out, terming them *framing devices* appears more suitable. The term does not imply a confining definition; rather, it suggests that more than just the individual device is needed to produce an effect. Framing devices are thus only previews of a more comprehensive, higher-level frame of reference (compare D'Angelo, 2018; Nisbet, 2010; van Gorp, 2010).

Summing up, demarcating frames in communication from non-frames in communication can be accomplished by theoretically narrowing down which frames in communication are searched for in a given text. However, even then it is impossible to objectively delimitate these frames and human comprehension is required. Because of this subjective component, 'framing devices' seems a more fitting term for text fragments that could be understood to emphasize certain aspects.

1.2.2 "Deservingness Perceptions Toward Refugees – A Gender Perspective" and *Frames in Thought*

Study 2 of this dissertation examines Germans' perceptions of refugees' deservingness from a gender perspective. In this study, my co-authors and I explored how gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism influence differing perceptions of the deservingness of male and female refugees. Using a factorial survey experiment, we found that male refugees are more likely to get 'punished' if unwilling to work. In addition to contributing to the broader literature on deservingness perceptions of refugees, this study investigates gender as a crucial explanatory factor for the differential treatment of refugees. Identifying gender stereotypes as an additional cognitive process that drives opinions on refugees also informs my discussion of Druckman's

conceptualization of frames in thought. This is particularly the case, because reconciling gender stereotypes with frames in thought is challenging, as is elaborated in the following.

Bearing in mind the earlier discussion about what constitutes frames in communication, the manipulations presented to respondents in the factorial survey experiment in Study 2 can be recognized as framing devices. These devices represented different attributes of the vignette refugees about whom survey respondents were supposed to form their opinions. All attributes were chosen to reflect different dimensions of the above-described CARIN scale of deservingness (Knotz et al., 2022; Meuleman et al., 2020; van Oorschot, 2000). For instance, a vignette refugee would be described as either looking for a job or not looking for a job – an attribute regularly utilized to illustrate the *reciprocity* dimension for an individual refugee.

Apart from indicating deservingness characteristics in such an explicit way, the study found that deservingness tokens can also exhibit effects indirectly. The gender of the vignette refugee can, on the one hand, be an indicator of the *identity* dimension. Following the selective logic of the deservingness dimensions, individuals who are perceived as "closer to 'us'" (van Oorschot, 2000, p. 36) are considered more deserving. According to this logic, female survey respondents might view female vignette refugees as more deserving. Similarly, male survey respondents might view male vignette refugees as more deserving.[11]

On the other hand, the study discovered that the gender characteristic of vignette refugees triggered *gender stereotypes* in respondents, which had a multifaceted impact on deservingness evaluations. For one, these stereotypes moderated the effect of the above-described *reciprocity* criterion on opinions. The study found that vignette refugees described as male and not actively seeking a job were evaluated as considerably less deserving of support compared to vignettes with the exact same characteristics, apart from their gender. For another, expectations regarding vignette refugees' levels of education varied by gender: whereas only a university degree increased deservingness ascriptions for male refugees, even vocational training was enough to enhance deservingness for female refugees.

Such interactions of issue dimensions transcend Druckman's additive model of frames in thought. In the study, gender, education, and effort to find a job were all individual dimensions of the issue 'vignette refugees' deservingness' and together constituted survey respondents' frames in thought. However, also the interactions of these dimensions played a leading role for opinion formation on the issue. Frames in thought are, to Druckman, not the same as the overall

[11] Empirically, this was not the case in Study 2, see Appendix B.1.

opinion on an issue. Rather, individual issue dimensions are weighted and evaluated. In his understanding, the gender stereotype findings of Study 2 represent a change in weight or evaluation of, e.g., the education dimension because of information on gender. Overall frames in thought, however, would not be affected by such interactions and would still 'only' consist of, e.g., gender, education and effort to find a job.

Such a conceptualization is possible, but appears unfavorable because its narrow focus on the concrete aspects of the issue at hand decidedly overlooks broader interpretative cognitive schemes. One might argue, however, that broader considerations like gender stereotypes or sexism should be explicitly included in the conceptualization of frames in thought, especially when they have such a multifaceted impact. After all, frames in thought are broadly supposed to "help[s] individual citizens make sense of the issues…" (Kinder and Sanders, 1996, p. 164 in Druckman, 2011, p. 282).

Druckman's conceptualization could be adapted to accommodate these broader cognitive schemes. One approach might be to define the interaction between, for example, gender and education as an additional dimension of the overall issue deservingness. This would allow the original formula to encompass all relevant thoughts that are processed. However, this has the drawback of potentially leading to the creation of many different interaction dimensions. Not only could the interaction between gender and education emerge as a new dimension, but also one between gender and job-seeking efforts, one between education and job-seeking efforts, and even a three-way interaction between all of the above. Such complex, mixed dimensions are highly incomprehensible at face value; this approach thus appears rather inadvisable.

A different solution might be to reconsider the alternative comprehension of frames in thought, namely as central organizing ideas in mind. As discussed above, this conceptualization is widely embraced by framing scholars (Cacciatore et al., 2016; Gamson and Modigliani, 1987) and appears to affect also Druckman's understanding. If frames in thought are conceived in this way, the idea of how different aspects of an issue could interact with one another to form an opinion is arguably much easier to grasp. That a frame in thought of benevolent sexism might impact evaluations of employability is more promptly comprehensible than that gender influences perceptions of levels of education. Although this difference is small, it already gives an account of the processes behind the interaction and therefore has a greater informative value.

Also, with this conceptualization, the challenge of frames in thought (in both conceptualizations) being unobservable and thus never distinctly tangible could be more easily addressed. For example, in Studies 2 and 3 of this dissertation, only framing effects – or more

precisely, attitudes toward a particular issue – were measured. Attempting to identify all parts of an individual's frame of thought, as Druckman conceptualizes it, is empirically extremely difficult. While one approach could be to ask individuals to write down all the aspects they consider when forming an opinion on an issue, the active contemplation would likely elicit more or different dimensions than those that would naturally constitute their frame in thought. Instead, it may be much easier to focus on individual aspects of a frame in thought, such as gender stereotypes, and study these components separately. These individual aspects, or 'frames in thought' in the alternative conceptualization, could be examined more clearly to understand the effects of prior information and respondent-level characteristics on individuals. Additionally, it would be simpler to hypothesize the effects these aspects might have on how other factors influence opinions.

In empirical studies, rather than vaguely attributing an input to an overall output with multiple mechanisms at play and calling it a framing effect, researchers could be more explicit about the individual aspects that influence opinions and the way people understand the world. This approach would allow for a more nuanced analysis of how specific frames in thought affect perception and decision-making.

Summing up, in this section I highlighted the difficulty of Druckman's conceptualization of frames in thought in failing to accommodate interactions between different issue dimensions when forming an opinion, as deduced from the findings of Study 2 of this dissertation. Additionally, I noted that higher order concepts that impact opinion formation are not recognized in his understanding of frames in thought. The alternative conceptualization of frames in thought as central organizing ideas offered a way to circumvent some of these issues.

1.2.3 "The Impact of Stereotypes on Framing Effect Duration" and *Framing Effects*

Study 3 of this dissertation addresses how stereotypes in communication impact framing effects. Stereotypes in communication may function similarly to cues, and given that empirical studies have shown significant interactions between cues and frames in communication, it was hypothesized that combining stereotypes with frames in communication could yield valuable, novel insights into framing effects. In a survey experiment, which again focused on gender stereotypes and perceptions of refugees' deservingness in Germany, respondents were exposed to both equivalence and 'stereotypical frames' in regard to a fictitious proposed policy. This policy aimed at supporting refugees in Germany and respondents were asked whether they thought the program was worthy of support or not. Results were mixed: While stereotypical

frames initially seemed to have no effect, this changed when a fitting cognitive schema – here prior-held stereotypes – was included as moderator. The study and this moderation effect shed light on framing effects through changes in accessibility and applicability. This is particularly interesting given the issues with Druckman's conceptualization of framing effects described above (Section1.1.3).

Study 3 paired the findings from Study 2 on gender stereotypes as cognitive process effectuating framing effects with a theoretical argument from the literature that more *applicable* frames in communication should exhibit particularly long-lasting effects (Baden and Lecheler, 2012). The study tested immediate and over-time effects of 'stereotypical frames' in communication – frames expected to trigger particularly applicable considerations – and their interaction with an additional, complimentary frame (see below).[12]

Study 3 was largely motivated by the findings of Study 2 on gendered deservingness perceptions and how they impacted frames in thought. As described in the previous section (1.1.2), Study 2 presented survey respondents with vignette refugees who had different characteristics, each alluding to a CARIN dimension of deservingness. Respondents were then asked to assess the deservingness of each vignette refugee. Within Druckman's model of frames in thought, this can be interpreted as respondents being provided with information on different aspects of the overall issue of 'Vignette Refugee's Deservingness'. The information treatment – the frame in communication – made these aspects more available and accessible, eventually shaping (parts of) respondents' frames in thought.[13]

As noted, the gender characteristic of vignette refugees thereby exhibited multiple effects. Not only did information on gender directly influence opinions on deservingness, but it also affected how respondents considered refugees' characteristics regarding reciprocal behavior (e.g., male refugees were 'punished' more for showing unwillingness to search for a job). We argue that this was due to gender stereotypes that were activated in respondents during the survey.

The gender aspect of the overall issue 'Vignette Refugee's Deservingness' thus appeared particularly relevant, or highly *applicable*, in survey respondents' opinion formation processes. Especially applicable frames are argued to be potentially durable, because they can establish new connections between previously unconnected beliefs. These connections may be stored in

[12] The interaction is irrelevant to the introductory chapter of this dissertation and therefore only addressed in the study itself.

[13] There may have been additional considerations that individuals took into account, e.g., whether vignette refugees had children or not. However, as discussed in the study (Section 3.2.1), precautions were made to keep these as few as possible.

memory and can subsequently influence the formation of additional novel considerations (Baden and Lecheler, 2012). In Study 2, I did not account for framing effects over time. This could have helped detect whether the impact of the gender-stereotype-invoking frame in communication on opinions was indeed due to applicability considerations. To better understand this dynamic, I decided to explore the durability of 'stereotypical frames' in my third and final study.

Study 3 thus focused on 'stereotypical frames', which, following Druckman, were defined as 'verbal or non-verbal statements that place clear emphasis on descriptive characteristics *stereotypically* associated with a delimitable group' (Section 4.2.2). The stereotypical frame used in the study thereby differed from Study 2. For Study 3, a characteristic considered to be even more stereotypically associated with female refugees than education or the willingness to find a job was selected. In a pre-study, respondents were asked to identify the stereotypes and attributes they believed were most commonly linked to specific social groups within the German population. The findings predominantly highlighted traits related to vulnerability. Consequently, the stereotypical frame used in the study was crafted to activate gender stereotypes concerning vulnerability (compare footnote 10 in Chapter 4).[14]

The stereotypical frame was presented as an emphasis frame. As discussed above (Section 1.1.3), this may imply that any observed framing effect could also involve an information effect. To mitigate this, the frame conveyed its message as a suggestion rather than a factual statement. Additionally, its content – female vulnerability during flight – was chosen based on the pre-test findings, which identified it as a prominent stereotype associated with female refugees. Given that this information was likely familiar also to the respondents of the main study, any observed impact was potentially driven only by the framing effect rather than new information. The stereotypical frame read:

> "**Women and girls** were probably ***particularly frequent*** victims of this violence." (*Text originally in German, own translation. Formatting equivalent in provided treatment.*)

Respondents in the study either received this frame, or no frame with information on female vulnerability. Additionally, all respondents were exposed to one of three different versions of

[14] Additionally, I attempted to select a real-world stereotypical frame from the edited text-corpus of frames on refugees' deservingness from Study 1. This would have considerably increased the realism of the experimental design. Unfortunately, I did not find something adequate that highlighted a stereotypical characteristic without simultaneously conveying strong political bias. Therefore, I decided to model and pre-test an own frame that fit the needs of the survey experiment.

an equivalence frame[15]. This created a total of six treatment groups (2x3). The equivalence frame presented the effectiveness of the fictitious policy to support refugees in one of three ways: effective for seven out of ten participants, ineffective for three out of ten, or both statements simultaneously (see Table 3.1 in Chapter 4 below). The goal of the frame was to achieve framing effects by increasing the availability and accessibility but not the applicability of the issue aspect 'in-/effectiveness of proposed policy'.

On the one hand, availability and accessibility were increased through providing the new information on the policy's effectiveness (in different forms) to all survey respondents. Comparing between respondents enabled to identify effects caused through increases in accessibility of the in-/effectiveness aspect of the proposed policy. On the other hand, it was not expected that respondents would engage in applicability considerations, as no fitting cognitive schema was anticipated to be triggered by the equivalence frame in communication. Also, respondents were not encouraged to actively contemplate applicability. If respondents were to engage in applicability considerations, no framing effect should be observed because the information on the policy's effectiveness was identical for all respondents (compare Druckman, 2011).

The results of the study provide some insights regarding the accessibility and applicability mechanisms of framing effects. However, these are not completely straightforward and require interpretation: First of all, the provided stereotypical frame was designed to particularly trigger applicability considerations and thus induce longer-lasting framing effects. Thereby, respondents were not actively encouraged to contemplate applicability. Only when prior-held stereotypes – a cognitive schema – were included as moderator were framing effects found. This suggests that the fitting cognitive schema triggered applicability considerations, achieving the framing effect.[16]

The identified effects were thereby unlikely to have been driven by increases in accessibility, because they would have then been observable even without including the moderator. The underlying cognitive process tied to accessibility would typically precede applicability

[15] More precisely, the second frame depicted logically equivalent information in differently valenced forms. The precise term 'equivalence frame' is therefore misleading. In the study, the frame was thus described as 'valence frame'.

[16] As discussed in the study (Sub-Chapters 4.4 and 4.5), not only respondents with prior-held stereotypes in favor of female refugees may have applied these considerations. Rather, and perhaps even more strongly, respondents with decidedly no prior-held stereotypes *in favor* of female refugees may have also applied these considerations and then responded with reactance to the frame. Reactance could therefore also be an interesting cognitive schema to consider in future studies.

considerations, meaning such effects should have emerged in the initial analysis. The absence of such effects might be attributed to the overall high salience of the issue on which individuals may have already held entrenched opinions (Chong and Druckman, 2010). When strong pre-existing opinions are in place, accessibility increases alone, induced by frames in communication, may not be sufficient to trigger framing effects. Incidentally, also Study 1 suggests that the issue of refugee deservingness chosen for this dissertation was unlikely to cause strong framing effects. Even in the wake of a focusing event, politicians barely changed their framing of the issue. Their awareness of the high salience of the refugee issue for the German population may have prevented them from adapting their framing to avoid appearing inconsistent or indecisive, especially since framing was unlikely to significantly impact public opinion on this issue.

Second of all, the applied equivalence frames appeared to primarily trigger accessibility-based framing effects. This conclusion is supported by the observation that these frames had predominantly short-term effects on opinions (compare Figure 3.1 in Chapter 4). Also, as hypothesized, applicability considerations were likely not engaged. This is documented by the significant differences between respondents in the different framing conditions. These would have otherwise dissolved, given that the information in the different equivalence frame conditions was identical (Druckman, 2011). Since equivalence frames allow for the exclusion of information effects through between-subject comparisons, the identified framing effects likely resulted only from changes in the accessibility of the policy effectiveness consideration.

Summing up, in Study 3 I aimed to align with Cacciatore et al.'s (2016) first recommendation by isolating framing effects induced only by changes in applicability. This was challenging, but possible and commends future framing studies to further focus on such effects. Such a narrower definition of framing effects has the advantage of leaving room for other phenomena that have been well-studied in different disciplines, particularly priming effects. Moreover, this approach would clearly delineate the framing effects literature around a specific, unique kind of effect. However, it would also likely reduce the number of identified 'framing effects' – also my equivalence 'framing effect' would then have to be considered a priming effect.

Considering Cacciatore et al.'s (2016) second recommendation, equivalence frames serve as a valuable tool for excluding information effects from an overall framing effect. However, it remains unclear whether and how equivalence frames induce effects through mechanisms other than increases in accessibility – effects that are, as discussed, identical to priming effects. If an equivalence frame were to somehow induce applicability considerations, it would also need to

prevent frame recipients from recognizing the logical equivalence of different portrayals of the same information. Otherwise, no framing effects through equivalence frames would emerge. Given this, it seems impractical to rely exclusively on equivalence frames in framing effect research, especially if framing effects are defined solely based only on applicability-considerations. Emphasis frames, and even more so stereotypical frames, remain essential for ongoing considerations in this research field.

Finally, to distinguish emphasis framing effects from information effects, it commends itself to choose a salient enough issue so that frame recipients can be meaningfully expected to have already encountered the information provided by the frame beforehand. However, highly salient issues allow for less strong framing effects, introducing a potential drawback there.

1.3 Takeaways and Outlook: Framing as Something Unique

With this introduction I provided a review and critical discussion of one of the most prominent definitions of framing in political science and political communication research. Based on the three empirical studies that follow this introduction, I reflected on the three distinct parts of James Druckman's conceptualization, his three definitions and remarks on *Frames in Communication*, *Frames in Thought*, and *Framing Effects*. Some difficulties thereby became apparent and the following reiterates their essence, recapitulates the conclusions drawn from the studies, and suggests improvements.

Firstly, the distinction between frames in communication and frames in thought makes up an important contribution of Druckman's work. However, it also raises a couple of questions: According to Druckman, frames in communication are 'statements that place clear emphasis on particular considerations'. This makes *a* frame in communication a statement that places clear emphasis on *a* particular consideration.[17] This one particular consideration thereby mirrors Gamson and Modigliani's (1987) "central organizing idea or story line", or an overall frame of reference. Why, then, a frame in thought is supposed to constitute the *sum* of all of these considerations, instead of a singular one, is not clear. With this part of his conceptualization Druckman departs from an understanding of an overall frame that would merely place frames in different locations – in thought or in communication. Rather, frames in thought and frames in communication are to him two distinct *concepts*.

Instead of defining frames in thought as Druckman does, the alternative understanding of them as constituting central organizing ideas would, as discussed in Section 1.2.2 based on Study 2, more clearly address all considerations influencing the opinion formation process. For instance, an individual could have a gender-stereotype frame in thought, that could interact with another one, e.g., one of deservingness based on reciprocity. As with Druckman's original understanding of frames in thought, an actual attitude on an issue would still be delimitable from a frame in thought, because this would still include evaluations of issue dimensions. The issue dimensions would be affected by overarching frames in thought (*frames in thought in my understanding*), instead of interacting with one another in unspecified ways. These frames in

[17] As Druckman only defines frames in communication in plural, it requires some interpretation to decipher what *a* frame in communication constitutes: it could be a single statement that places 'clear emphasis' on one, or on multiple considerations. Despite the above discussed difficulties to understand what exactly 'clear emphasis' is, it is reasonable to expect that, given this reference, a single statement could only be placing 'clear emphasis' on one consideration at a time.

thought would, thus, carry a more comprehendible meaning and also fit to the conceptualization of frames in communication as emphases on a certain aspect of an issue.

Concerning frames in communication, already small bits of text can trigger certain considerations and suffice to portray an issue from a different perspective (as outlined in Section 1.2.1). However, this requires human cognition, making objectively delimiting frames in communication next to impossible. In Study 1 I thus implemented my own approach for inter-subjectively identifying frames in communication. Based on both the study's results and theoretical considerations, I argued for replacing 'frames in communication' with the term 'framing devices'. Framing devices are cues (bits of information that let individuals draw inferences without providing more detailed information, see above) for overall frames which may or may not align with certain frames in thought of individuals. The term 'framing device' better reflects the potential, rather than a necessity, to induce framing effects in individuals. Additionally, if a frame in thought were defined so that it aligns with what was originally described as a frame in communication – if the two would essentially represent the same concept but in different contexts – then a framing device differs from a frame in communication. Only comprehensive descriptions of overarching ideas, such as, e.g., a lengthy explanation on the content of a gender stereotype, would qualify as a frame in communication. However, such explanations are rare in political discourse and not the focus of the framing effect literature.

Unfortunately, also these specifications of frames in communication and framing devices do not do away with some of the difficulties of frame identification detailed in Sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2. Based on the experience gained in Study 1 and described in Section 1.2.1, a recommendation for frame identification pertains to the necessity to determine beforehand for which overarching frames framing devices are to be identified in a given text. Because of the role individual perception plays on how some devices could relate to a whole myriad of different overarching ideas, it only makes sense to predefine the overall frame (e.g., deservingness) and the facets to it (e.g., the CARIN criteria) for which devices are searched. Methods for reliably coding such devices should then be similar to those followed in Study 1, or those proposed by van Gorp (2010). Thereby, great attention has to be paid to inter-coder reliability and a coding team as diverse as possible would be preferable to include as many angles on an issue as possible.

Secondly, with the proposed understanding of frames in thought, Druckman's definition of framing effects also has to be revisited. In the following I use the concepts of frames in thought and framing devices as explained above. If one were to adapt Druckman's definition of framing

effects, firstly, a framing effect would occur when a framing device literally alters a frame in thought. This would mean that the actual content of, e.g., a gender stereotype would be changed. As such a concept is deep-seated and has many different facets to it, altering it is more akin to persuasion and requires a considerable amount of contemplation of new information. This does not fit the idea of a framing effect. Second of all, a framing effect might instead align with what Druckman originally envisioned: that a framing device influences the sum of 'frames in thought', or the overall mindset. For instance, if a gender stereotype becomes more significant in evaluating a refugee's deservingness due to a framing device emphasizing it, this could be considered a framing effect. A framing effect would then amount to any change in opinion – and it is mostly opinions that are measured in framing effect studies – brought about by a framing device.

Such a conceptualization, however, still retains the difficulties in identifying precise mechanisms that were described in Section 1.2.3. Opinion changes could result from various mechanisms, such as priming effects due to increased salience, or persuasion, which involves changes in the weighting of an issue's aspects. Therefore, I concur with the opinion that framing effects should be narrowly conceptualized as based on the applicability mechanism, to ensure they represent something distinct (compare Cacciatore et al., 2016). Taking frames as overarching concepts as basis, I also define framing effects as instances where an opinion changes because the subject is viewed through a (different) frame in thought due to exposure to a framing device. However, beyond simply increasing the accessibility of a new frame in thought – which would constitute priming – the device has to trigger an interpretative heuristic based on prior knowledge and potentially involving further consideration. This aspect of the opinion change is the framing effect: through the framing device, a particular interpretative lens or frame is newly, or more strongly, applied to the issue.

I detailed the considerable measurement difficulties this understanding of framing effects presents in Section 1.2.3. One approach to mitigate the issue of distinguishing framing effects from information effects is by using equivalence frames (or more accurately: equivalent framing devices). However, this introduces a new challenge: increases in accessibility and in applicability tend to occur simultaneously. As attempted in Study 3, this problem may be addressed by looking at framing effects over time, given that increases in accessibility are typically short-lived (especially Baden and Lecheler, 2012). The absence of lasting effects from the equivalence frames (or equivalent framing devices) in Study 3 may be attributed to their failure to evoke applicability considerations. Such considerations are more likely to arise

through framing devices tied to stereotypical frames. Future research could therefore attempt to apply equivalent framing devices of stereotypical frames and evaluate their effects over time. Prior-held stereotypes could thereby act as proxy for individuals of whom applicability considerations could most likely be expected.

In any case, these challenges are empirical in nature and do not undermine the proposed conceptualization of framing effects. However, this conceptualization does necessitate a reexamination of much of the existing framing effect literature, at least to accurately classify discovered effects as either priming or persuasion. In return, framing literature would gain considerable conceptual clarity, potentially helping to remove framing from the 'dark corner' where it is sometimes perceived as merely a tool for political elite manipulation. Furthermore, by more clearly distinguishing between framing and priming effects, political communication literature could better integrate findings on priming from psychology and contribute its own insights[18] – an effort already called for by Druckman in his early introduction of the concept to political science (e.g., Druckman, 2001a).

[18] For example, there are calls for more replications of priming effect studies in the psychological literature (e.g., Cesario, 2014) and defense mechanisms against priming effects, discovered in the psychological literature, would be highly interesting to investigate in a setting of political communication (e.g., Gollwitzer et al., 2011).

2. Study 1 – Focusing Events and the Framing of Refugees' Deservingness – New Year's Eve 2015/16 in Germany and the Reaction of the Political Elite

Abstract: 'Focusing Events' often entail public opinion change and discursive shifts in the broader public and the media, but we know little about politicians' reactions to such events? Do they alter their framing to match changed public sentiment, or do they stick to their prior policy positions? I investigate the reactions of 84 relevant German politicians on the federal level to the events of New Year's Eve 2015/16 in Cologne and other German cities. This night marks a turning point in German public sentiment during the 'European Migration Crisis', following a tumultuous night with over 550 reported criminal offenses of sexual harassment, allegedly committed primarily by refugees. Focusing on politicians' framing of refugees' deservingness, I manually coded 4,639 Facebook and Twitter posts for the six months surrounding the event and provide both descriptive and analytical insights on how the events of New Year's Eve impacted politicians' framing. My results indicate the usefulness of investigating political communication by looking at how politicians frame refugees' (un-) deservingness of support. Also, they show that the focusing event barely altered elite political discourse. If it did, however, this can be explained by office-seeking goals of politicians. This suggests that politicians absorb even highly disruptive events into their overall communicative strategies.

Keywords: Focusing Events, Framing, Deservingness, Refugees, Germany, Office-Seeking, Policy-Seeking

2.1 Introduction

The events of New Year's Eve 2015/2016 (in the following: NYE 2015/16) in Cologne and other major German cities marked a key turning point in German public discourse on immigration and refugees[1], and on the overall, so-called 'European Migration Crisis'. In this night, during the New Year festivities, hundreds of young men sexually assaulted and harassed women in Cologne and other major German cities. Eyewitnesses and the, mainly, female victims described a "gauntlet" (Schneider, 2016; German original, own translation) through strongly intoxicated men; in the direct aftermaths of NYE 2015/16, around 550 criminal offenses with regard to sexual harassment were reported to the police (Arendt et al., 2017; Werthschulte, 2017). The quantity of these reported offenses, combined with the apparent inability of the police to respond adequately, led to the broad consensus in Germany that the events constituted a "serious breakdown of public order" (Wigger et al., 2022, p. 22). Although the precise course of events remains contentious to this day – one reconstruction of events concluded that 'only' several dozen men actually assaulted and robbed women, and that this corresponded to the rather usual conditions of crowded New Year festivities (Brenner and Ohlendorf, 2016) – this impression has persisted (see below).

Setting aside the precise course of events, the main point of contention was less about the events themselves and more about the alleged perpetrators. These were described as predominantly of Arabic and North-African appearance (Behrendes, 2016). Because, at the time, these attributes fitted many refugees and immigrants in Germany, the effect of the events on public sentiment toward refugees was considerable: Firstly, in a representative opinion poll of Germans directly after NYE 2015/16, one third of respondents claimed that because of the events they had substantially changed their mind toward refugees and migration policy in Germany (FOCUS Online, 2016; Forschungsgruppe Wahlen e.V., 2016). Compared to 46% percent in December 2015, for the first time a clear majority of 60% believed that Germany could not cope with the large number of refugees arriving, representing a turning point of public sentiment (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen e.V., 2016). Secondly, 70% (compared to 62% in October 2015) anticipated an increase in crime in Germany due to the large number of refugees (ibid.). And thirdly, even several years after the events, individuals still stated that their "sense of security had since been shattered" (Stern TV: *6 Jahre Kölner Silvesternacht: „Das war die schlimmste*

[1] As is often the case in the literature on immigration, this study makes no particular distinctions between immigrants and refugees. The two terms are used interchangeably, also seeing that public discourse and political elite communication in Germany – as well as politicians in this study's data – often conflate the two, similar groups.

Hölle", 2021; German original, own translation). Such opinions sharply contrasted the previously held, extremely friendly and accommodating attitudes toward the newcomers in Germany and other European countries (see, for instance, Passauer Neue Presse, 2015): the formerly 'poor and needy' refugees had suddenly mutated to 'aggressive and violent perpetrators' (Wigger et al., 2022).

2.1.1 Focusing Events

The disruptiveness of the event, coupled with its stark contrast to the relatively refugee-friendly atmosphere in Germany beforehand, turn NYE 2015/16 into a 'focusing event'. A 'focusing event', sometimes also referred to as "critical event" (Rogowski and Tucker, 2019, p. 903) or "critical moment" (Carmines and Stimson, 1990 in Rogowski and Tucker, 2019, p. 903), is

> "an event that is sudden, relatively rare, [and] can be reasonably defined as harmful or revealing the possibility of potentially greater future harms (…)" (Birkland, 1997, p. 22; see also Kingdon, 2003, pp. 94–95).

Because focusing events spotlight a specific problem or sets of problems – as was the case with NYE 2015/16 – citizens start contemplating these (differently), and may think more about how these problems affect their individual lives. As a result, they may then update their attitudes toward the overall-related, salient political issue (Rogowski and Tucker, 2019).

Such changes in individuals' perceptions as consequences of focusing events oftentimes manifest themselves also in similar changes in public discourse, or 'discursive shifts' (see Krzyżanowski, 2013; Krzyżanowski et al., 2018). But while studies on changes in the public and the media conversation abound (Alimi and Maney, 2018; Arendt et al., 2017; Wigger et al., 2022), very little attention has been paid to shifts in *political elite* discourse as a result of focusing events (for exceptions see Bennett, 2018; Weiß et al., 2021). However, politicians' views of societal problems and target groups play a pivotal role for how a state addresses its problems and supports particular groups (Boushey, 2016; Kreitzer et al., 2022; Schneider and Ingram, 1993). In shaping the "realm of discourse" (Anderson, 1978, p. 23), politicians can pave the way for policy change. It is therefore important to better understand their reactions to focusing events. Also, this can help assess the actual relevance of focusing events in the political process.

In their (public) reactions to a focusing event, politicians' responses often diverge from the wider public. This occurs because the calculations behind the politicians' stated opinions differ

from those of the public: While the public may react more openly on how it feels toward a certain issue, politicians have to frame issues strategically in consideration of the goals they pursue (Budge and Farlie, 1983) – including, office-seeking or policy-seeking goals (van de Wardt, 2015). Whether these considerations matter for politicians who pursue their goals in the wake of a focusing event, however, lacks empirical scrutiny.

In this study, I test hypotheses on how politicians react to the focusing event NYE 2015/16. This helps better understand the relevance of such events altogether – as well as providing more general insights on political behavior. My overall research question therefore is:

> *Does politicians' framing of refugees change in reaction to the focusing event New Year's Eve 2015/2016 in Germany?*

In the following I elaborate on my conceptualization of politicians' framing of refugees. This is necessary because I base the precise hypotheses I address in this study on parts of this conceptualization. Also, the considerable data effort on which this study is based, the detailed manual coding of Facebook and Twitter posts, warrants a rather detailed explanation of the conceptualization. Only after this do I present my theoretical expectations that lead to the hypotheses. Then, after detailing data collection efforts and the measurement scheme, I present and discuss my descriptive and analytical results.

2.1.2 Conceptualization of Politicians' Framing: Deservingness Perceptions

Politicians implement redistributive policies in support of those, who are considered to deserve it (Blomberg et al., 2017; Esmark and Schoop, 2017). Following Lasswell's (1950) definition on politics, opinions on deservingness are formed by answering the question 'Who should Get What, and Why' (Laenen et al., 2019; Nielsen et al., 2020; van der Aa et al., 2017; van Oorschot et al., 2017). This question is answered for all kinds of target groups of welfare, among them refugees (see, among others, Appelbaum, 2002; Reeskens and van der Meer, 2020; Theiss, 2022). As policy-makers, politicians' deservingness opinions have real-world consequences, making them particularly important to study. Also, any changes in deservingness evaluations induced by a focusing event add to the significance of such events as a whole. To better assess their relevance, I therefore compare German politicians' framing of refugees' before and after NYE 2015/16 in terms of deservingness adscriptions. Zooming out is thereby necessary, because politicians barely address the event directly; 'Cologne', as the primary keyword associated with the NYE 2015/16 events, was only mentioned around 50 times, or in 5.13% of

the posts on which this study is based. This highlights the need for a broader analytical framework.

The CARIN criteria of deservingness (**C**ontrol, **A**ttitude, **R**eciprocity, **I**dentity, and **N**eed; Meuleman et al., 2020, based on van Oorschot, 2000) have distinguished themselves as the most common operationalization of deservingness. They divide perceptions of a social group's deservingness into different analytical dimensions, each of which emphasizes for what reason an individual or a group is considered to be deserving (or undeserving) of support.[2] For instance, a refugee deemed to be particularly *need*y because of a psychological trauma contracted during his or her flight, might be considered particularly deserving of support (compare Chapter 3). In the meantime, another refugee who committed a crime in the host society might be considered undeserving of support, in view of his or her detrimental *reciprocation* toward support s/he already received from that society.

Apart from the five CARIN criteria of deservingness, two additional arguments have been proposed to expand the original scheme, presenting more global perspectives on who qualifies as deserving of support measures. While according to the first, 'universalism', individuals may feel convinced that members of a particular social group[3] should *all* receive a certain support measure *no matter what*, according to the second, 'rejectionism', *no* members should receive support measures *no matter what* (compare Hänig, 2019; Laenen et al., 2019; Nielsen et al., 2020). The two arguments stand somewhat outside of the logic of the original CARIN criteria, because they reject the idea of conditionality altogether. However, first empirical findings have indicated that, at least, 'universalism' might account for as much as 40% of public sentiment (Laenen and Meuleman, 2017).

This study is based on the CARIN criteria of deservingness and the additional universalist and rejectionist arguments, and thus a total of seven different dimensions. Deductively taking a thorough theoretical framework as basis for the analysis promises informative, fine-grained insights. What is more, considering the descriptive distribution of these dimensions – along with that of the under-researched 'universalism' and 'rejectionism' – in politicians' usage is, in

[2] The CARIN criteria have been criticized (Knotz et al., 2022; Heuer and Zimmermann, 2020). While some of the issues pointed out were also encountered during data annotation for this work, the codebook was designed according to the best-established and -reviewed framework at the time (Meuleman et al., 2020) and augmented by some additional dimensions, that are discussed in more recent literature (see below).

[3] Importantly for this criterion, the characteristic defining the social group is in itself not a deservingness criterion. For instance, a social group exclusively made up of victims of violence would be considered deserving of support because of their need, and not on universalist grounds. Characteristics defining a group membership in the sense of the universalist argument are, rather, such vague indications as the phrase 'all refugees and migrants'.

itself, already interesting. After all, how does politicians' use of the different deservingness criteria compare to, for instance, the roles these criteria typically play in the wider public opinion?

In addition, analytically assessing whether framing changed in the wake of the focusing event is enticing as a means to empirically assess a consequence of this particular event, and to draw conclusions on focusing events' more generally. Due to the extensive amount of deservingness dimensions, however, it is reasonable to zoom in on the most important ones. Because it is not yet known which dimensions are most used by politicians, I focus on those that are regularly found to be most important to the wider public (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran, 2017; Fliethmann et al., 2024; Kootstra, 2016; Nielsen et al., 2020). Due to the interrelations and interdependencies politicians have with the wider public (see below), it can reasonably be expected that those dimensions will be most relevant to them that also mirror those of the wider public. These are introduced in the following.

The first particularly important dimension is the *need* dimension, i.e., arguments on deservingness made according to the need criterion. Considering immigrants to Germany, Czymara and Schmidt-Catran (2023) for example show that characteristics of humanitarian need can clearly outperform other deservingness criteria (see also Fliethmann et al., 2024). Secondly, as already mentioned, '*universalist*' or 'welfare egalitarian' arguments that *all*, e.g., refugees, should receive support, have also been shown to bear significant empirical relevance (Laenen and Meuleman, 2017; Nielsen et al., 2020). And thirdly, those individuals who have already played their part in the past, who put in an effort to contribute in the present, or who exhibit characteristics associated with higher future *reciprocity* are also often found to be strongly favored by the public (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran, 2017; Fliethmann et al., 2024; Kootstra, 2016). In a study in four European countries on 20 focus groups discussing refugees, around 38.8% of the normative statements of participants on refugees' deservingness referenced reciprocity – no other dimension was emphasized this prominently (Nielsen et al., 2020). Because these three dimensions play such an important role for the wider public, they also warrant particular scrutiny in elite political communication.

Having described how politicians' framing of refugees is conceptualized in this study, the question arises how politicians react to a focusing event, here NYE 2015/16? I argue in this study that there are, broadly speaking, two: Either, politicians could alter their framing on refugees, impressed by the deteriorating public opinion. Or they could maintain their communicative positions from prior to the event. There are good reasons to anticipate each of

these reactions that I discuss in the following. The reasons for the two reactions thereby reflect strategic considerations by politicians, either regarding their chances of (re-)gaining office or their policy positions. Depending on their motivation, politicians are then expected to choose one of the two communicative reaction strategically.

2.1.3 Motivation for Politicians: Office-Seeking and Policy-Seeking Goals

The first communicative reaction to the focusing event reflects office-seeking calculations of politicians.[4] Office-seeking comprises that politicians' behavior mainly aims at maximizing personal benefits, be it "power, prestige, or a place in the limelight" (Budge and Laver, 1986, p. 485), by gaining political office (compare Budge and Laver, 1986 based on Riker, 1962; Strøm and Müller, 1999). As these benefits are independent of any actual policy positions, politicians are free to change their stated opinions to best support their office-seeking efforts. When, for instance through a focusing event, an issue becomes more salient to the public and public opinion experiences a considerable shift, it is reasonable to anticipate that politicians refocus and reframe their stances on said issue until they align more closely with public sentiment. In this way, office-seeking politicians are dependent on public opinion and react to it. But for the context of focusing events, politicians have already been shown to change their stated opinions according to the salience the public assigns to the issue (Lefevere et al., 2019). Also, this perspective on elite political behavior is supported by arguments that politicians commonly 'ride the wave' of public sentiment by campaigning on issues that dominate the news cycle (Gessler and Hunger, 2022), show particular responsiveness to these issues (Wagner and Meyer, 2014; Wlezien, 2004), and, more generally, that they follow citizens in public issue discussions (Barberá et al., 2019).

In the context of the focusing event NYE 2015/16 and the accompanying considerable shift in public opinion against refugees, the office-seeking perspective expects politicians to adjust their framing of refugees and portray refugees as less deserving after than before the event. Such a shift in framing, and even an intended policy intensification due to the event, is exemplified by a post by then minister of justice Heiko Maas (SPD):

[4] The ideas of office-seeking and policy-seeking behavior of politicians discussed in the following originate from the literature on coalition formation in competitive, electoral environments (see Riker, 1962; Swaan, 1973). However, as they offer broad, comprehensive motivations for political behavior, they can reasonably be applied to other fields of political behavior.

> "We decided (…), as a consequence of New Year's Eve in #Cologne, to simplify the expulsion of criminal foreigners" (own translation, original Facebook Post of Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (SPD), January 17th, 2016, 09:45 am).

The second communicative reaction to the focusing event reflects policy-seeking calculations of politicians. Contrary to the office-seeking perspective, this angle holds that "considerations of policy are foremost in the minds of the actors (…)" (Swaan, 1973, p. 88). Politicians are convinced by their offered policy solutions, because their policy stances are "linked to underlying ideological positions" (Budge and Laver, 1986, p. 485). Thus, they stick to their previous arguments even when faced with strong shifts in public opinion.[5] The clear expectation this perspective offers is therefore the opposite of what the office-seeking perspective hypothesizes: Instead of shifting positions or framing in the face of changes in public sentiment, politicians are expected to stick to their original policy positions and corresponding political communication.

With respect to NYE 2015/16, politicians are therefore anticipated to disregard the new public mood in their communicative strategies, meaning that no changes in politicians' framing of refugees should become apparent. As an example of such a position, in the following tweet, Ulla Jelpke from Die LINKE points out that, despite NYE 2015/16, laws should not be changed:

> "The right to asylum is a basic right – Exhaust existing laws instead of restricting refugees' rights! (…) #colognecentralrailwaystation" (own translation, original Twitter Post of the MP Ulla Jelpke (Die LINKE), January 11th, 2016, 11:18 am).

Thus, there are two contrasting, general explanatory approaches for politicians' reactions to the focusing event. The following formulates hypotheses on these reactions.

2.1.4 Hypotheses

The first hypothesis thereby considers the overall deservingness attributed to refugees by politicians. Changes in framing as a reaction to NYE 2015/16 can reasonably be expected to play out as increased emphases on refugees' undeservingness and decreases in focus on their deservingness.

[5] Some proponents of the policy-seeking perspective hold that policy-seeking parties and politicians require office seats to implement their policies (Strøm and Müller, 1999) and they could thus also be considered office-seeking to a certain degree. For the sake of clarity, for now I follow another version which holds that politicians "consider[s] policy purity to be more important than winning votes or gaining access to benefits of office (…)" (Harmel and Janda, 1994, p. 270). A discussion of mixes of the two strategies is provided below.

H1: Politicians are less likely to frame refugees as deserving of support after, than before New Year's Eve 2015/16.

The next three hypotheses concern the three above-mentioned specific dimensions of deservingness. Firstly, following NYE 2015/16, the public image of refugees moved away from portraying them as *needy*. If politicians were to align their framing with public sentiment, they would likely deemphasize the need dimension of deservingness in their overall communicative strategies.

H2: Politicians are less likely to highlight the deservingness of refugees based on their ***needs*** *after, than before New Year's Eve 2015/16.*

Arguments in the 'universalism' dimension of deservingness are, secondly, inherently refugee-friendly; here refugees should *all* receive support, *no matter what*. After NYE 2015/16, universalist arguments on refugees' deservingness are therefore expected to diminish in significance if politicians align themselves with the more refugee-critical public sentiment.

H3: Politicians are less likely to highlight the deservingness of refugees in terms of ***universalism*** *after, than before New Year's Eve 2015/16.*

Thirdly, NYE 2015/16 greatly increased the focus on negative acts ascribed to refugees. This pertains both to alleged behavior during that event, and other negative behavior in the period following it. Frames in the *reciprocity* dimension of deservingness are best suited to reflect such negative behavior of refugees: Negative acts can be understood as a form of 'reciprocal behavior', however as one that decreases support. If politicians align their framing with the more negative public sentiment after NYE 2015/16, this would likely involve an increased role of the reciprocity dimension of deservingness.

H4: Politicians are more likely to highlight the deservingness of refugees based on their ***reciprocity*** *after, than before New Year's Eve 2015/16.*

Given the two possible motivations for politicians' reactions to the event, it is reasonable to also consider which course of action politicians from individual parties are more likely to take. This is important because the degree to which parties pursue policy or office goals has been shown to vary (Helboe Pedersen, 2012). In line with the argument above, members of more office-seeking parties are expected to react more intensely to NYE 2015/16 through the shifts in framing outlined in Hypotheses 1-4. Hypothesis 5 addresses this, dividing parties with similar

goals roughly into two groups – those with rather office-seeking and those with rather policy-seeking goals.

> *H5: Politicians from more office-seeking parties are more likely to shift their framing on the deservingness of refugees from before to after New Year's Eve 2015/16, than politicians from more policy-seeking parties.*

2.2 Data and Methods

I compare politicians' framing of refugees' deservingness in a sample of a number of relevant parties' and party politicians' Facebook and Twitter posts before and after the events of NYE 2015/2016. First, I discuss the selection of politicians' social media accounts and the sample of posts analyzed in the study. Second, I detail the codebook creation, reference efforts to ensure reliability and provide examples to illustrate the annotation process and the coded deservingness dimensions. Eventually, I finish with considerations on the statistical method and the deployed independent variables.

2.2.1 Sample Selection

First of all, I identified relevant politicians as those politicians on the federal German political level, that were either member in at least one of the two committees of the German Bundestag which predominantly dealt with the Refugee Crisis ("Committee on Internal Affairs" and "Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid"), or who played an important role in their party during that time. Also, party accounts of the five member parties of the German Bundestag at the time were collected. The five parties are the Left (Die LINKE), the center-left Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen), the Social Democratic Party Germany (SPD), the center Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and their sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU; Lehmann et al., 2024). Additionally, posts by the party accounts, functionaries, and the experts on the issue from the right-wing 'Alternative for Germany' (AfD) and the center Free Democratic Party (FDP) were collected (ibid.). These latter two parties were included because of their general relevance for the German political landscape, which is reflected by the fact that they were members of several federal state parliaments in Germany at the time and that they (re-) entered the German Bundestag in the 2017 general election. Of the total number of 185 politicians and functionary capacities fitting these criteria, 84 individual active accounts on the issue were registered.[6]

Second of all, I decided to look at politicians' posts on the social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. These platforms were chosen for several reasons: Firstly, social media is prone like almost no other medium to act as a tool for direct communication between politicians and the wider public (Tromble, 2018). As accessible means of elite political communication without moderating effects by traditional media, specifically Twitter and Facebook were at the time

[6] Descriptive information on the politicians posting is provided in Appendix A.2.

highly important platforms for politicians to relay their political frames and interpretations of current events to the wider public (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2022). In the context of impending, agitating events that command imminent reactions by political leaders, politicians will likely seek to shape public opinion through posts on Facebook and Twitter, making these platforms the place to look for their reactions. Secondly, many politicians are active specifically on Facebook and Twitter. In Germany the two platforms are important media for politicians during elections: of all candidates of the main parties for the German federal election in 2013, 71.5% had a Twitter and/or a Facebook account (Quinlan et al., 2018, p. 1038)[7]. For the 2017 election, this number among candidates of the same parties had increased to 78.8% (own calculation based on Schmidt, 2017, p. 618). Thus, the two platforms present a very broad account of elite political discourse. And thirdly, social media has also grown in importance as a source to journalists (Broersma and Graham, 2013; Kapidzic et al., 2022). That is to say that it not only functions as a direct megaphone for politicians to the public, but also informs (and is informed by) traditional media (Conway et al., 2015). With regard to agenda setting, for instance, close contingencies between social media posts by politicians, official party accounts and traditional newspapers could be observed (Gilardi et al., 2022). For all of these reasons, shifts in framing by politicians are likely to become apparent in posts on social media, making them meaningful to study.

Third of all, for the given sample of politicians, I scraped all posts on Facebook and Twitter for the three months before and after the events of NYE 2015/16 (October 2015-March 2016). For the statistical analysis, I later decided to focus on a reduced timespan that better captures the changes in politicians' framing before and after NYE 2015/16. This was done because looking at too long a timeframe around the focusing event might include other, potentially disruptive events that impact the comparison. I therefore reduced the sample to the month before NYE 2015/16 as a sufficiently long, but not too long period of time to get an impression of politicians' framing of refugees, unaffected by NYE 2015/16. This month was compared to the two months succeeding the focusing event to allow for a (potentially) slow impact of the event on political communication to crystallize. Apart from a general hunch that the time frame should not be contorted by a prior key moment in September 2015[8], there was no substantive reason for this

[7] For Quinlan et al. (2018), the main parties at the time were the CDU, CSU, SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Die LINKE, Pirates and the AfD.

[8] On September 5th, a decision was made to allow busses with refugees passing through Hungary to enter Austria and Germany (Herbert and Schönhagen, 2020). This arguably kickoff point for the "European Migration Crisis" in Germany is likely to have impacted framing by politicians in October 2015 and, perhaps, even until November 2015.

particular choice of time frame. Therefore, extensive additional analyses exploring varying time frames were performed (see Appendix A.1).

Finally, once again regarding the full sample, here I only retained those posts for the annotation effort, that featured one or more of a list of 18 synonyms of the German word for refugee ("Flüchtling"), as well as the word itself.[9] The sample was additionally manually cleaned of any posts using the keywords in contexts not relating to the current refugee crisis – for instance, when a bank robber 'fled' the crime scene or when refugees after World War II were addressed. After cleaning, a total of 4,346 posts remained, with 2,372 posts written before and 1,974 posts written after 12.00 AM on January 1st, 2016. Figure 1.1 illustrates the distribution of posts per calendar week. It shows some variance in the total volume of posts with an especially low degree of social media activity by politicians around Christmas and New Year.

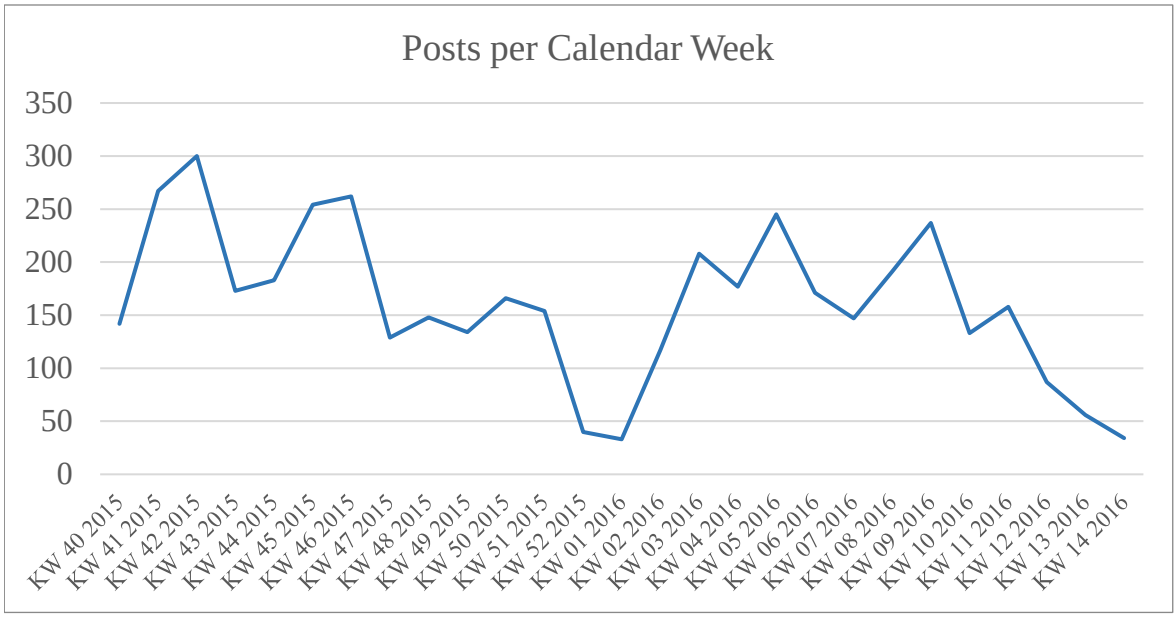
2.2.2 The Codebook

The sample of posts was then examined with respect to politicians' framing of refugees' deservingness, based on a newly-created, extensive codebook. Following scientific best-practice (Krippendorff, 2009; MacQueen et al., 1998), a coding scheme was established through several rounds of testing and revising of coding instructions by three researchers, including the author. Among other things not relevant to the study at hand (e.g., the precise policy measure of which refugees were described as being (un-) deserving), the codebook encompassed the CARIN-criteria of deservingness (van Oorschot, 2000), as well as the above mentioned alternative logics of 'universalism' and 'rejectionism'. Thus, I derived the framework of the codebook deductively from established theory and under the impression of previous coding of deservingness arguments (Nielsen et al., 2020).

Further, during the process of establishing the codebook, one additional deservingness dimension was inductively added to the theoretically derived ones, the 'legality argument'. This argument likely particularly pertains to the context of refugees' deservingness – but could be expected to also play a role for policy-makers in other contexts. The argument goes as follows: With regard to refugees, politicians often argue that only individuals who fulfill certain legal requirements deserve to receive certain benefits. For example, only refugees fleeing from persecution would have a *legal* claim to asylum, not those fleeing from, e.g., hazardous

[9] See Appendix A.3 for the full list of synonyms.

Figure 1.1 – Posts per Calendar Week by Politicians and Party Account. Absolute numbers.



economic conditions. The legality argument thus fits the overall logic of deservingness and conditional welfare allocation, but is not yet represented by the CARIN dimensions.[10]

The coding of the full sample of posts for the six months surrounding NYE 2015/16 was executed by four researchers that were not involved in the creation of the codebook, plus the author.[11] After several rounds of training on test sets of posts, the pairwise inter-coder reliability average reached *Krippendorff's* $\alpha = 0.67$.

In the following, I illustrate how deservingness frames were coded by means of several examples. They illustrate both how subliminal politicians framed deservingness, as well as the complexities of the coding effort. The first example gives an impression of the legality argument:

[10] Legal entitlements are often not dependent on refugees' behavior (*control* and *reciprocity* dimensions), nor expression of their attitude (*attitude* dimension), nor do they normally define a particular group cohesion (*identity*). Depending on the particular law, legal protections are sometimes granted to individuals with particular needs, so that *need* may be at the bottom of legal entitlements. However, arguing that an individual deserves a support measure due to a legal entitlement likely evokes empathy and emotionality to a smaller extent, than when an individual's neediness is emphasized as the main reason why s/he is considered to be deserving. Thus, although there is some overlap between this dimension and the others (as there is among the original CARIN criteria), the legality argument was introduced as an additional dimension of deservingness.

[11] Coding was carried out using Provalis Research (2004)'s *QDA Miner*.

> "(…) People without the right to stay will now be sent back to their home countries as quickly as possible" (own translation, original Facebook Post of the CSU party account, November 6th, 2015, 09:34 am).

For a post to be considered a deservingness frame it had to allude in some way or another to a deservingness attribute. This quote cites the right to stay as the decisive feature to explain who should return to one's home country, thus indicating a deservingness attribute. Also, this feature is a legal right, therefore the example was coded with the new legality dimension of deservingness. As the (explicit) policy highlighted the disadvantage of refugees, the post was additionally coded as emphasizing undeservingness.

The next two examples both illustrate the reciprocity dimension of deservingness:

> "@sigmargabriel & Dreyer with refugees in internships. "Those who are in training need secure residency" #malu2016 (own translation, original Twitter Post of then Vice-Chancellor and SPD party leader Sigmar Gabriel (SPD), March 8th, 2016, 03:12 pm).

In this example, being in training is used as a reason to determine who deserves secure residency. (Job) Training, as a typical indicator of (future) reciprocity (compare Fliethmann et al., 2024), thereby serves as the attribute of deservingness. And, because secure residency is advantageous to refugees, the post was coded as highlighting deservingness.

The next example also illustrates the reciprocity dimension of deservingness, however by indicating negative behavior as the feature defining undeservingness

> "The strengthening of state security forces and the swift deportation of criminal asylum seekers are a must! #colognecentralrailwaystation (…)" (own translation, original Twitter Post of the MP Paul Ziemiak (CDU), January 8th, 2016, 01:39 pm).

This quote cites criminal activity in the context of NYE 2015/16 as a reason for deportation. Negative, criminal behavior is thereby the attribute of deservingness, it indicates detrimental *reciprocation*. Also, because deportation is disadvantageous to refugees, the quote was again coded as highlighting undeservingness.

All in all, of the total 4,346 posts coded, around 44% (n = 1,918) eluded to refugees, but did not contain a deservingness attribute. These could not be coded as deservingness frames and therefore received the code 'Not applicable'. Posts with these codes were excluded from the statistical analysis. The analysis therefore took a total of 2,428 posts as its basis. The overall

distributions of the codes per platform and per party – including the use of the 'Not applicable' code – are presented in Appendix A.4. The full codebook is provided in Appendix A.5.

2.2.3 Analytical Model Setup

Between-posts comparisons are executed by applying random-intercept, multilevel linear models to the discussed subsample of posts.[12] These models incorporate that posts are nested in individual politicians and accounts that author the statements. Within these models, intercepts are allowed to vary between individual politicians, thus recognizing that posts by the same politician are not independent of each other.[13]

In the models, next to the time point of the post either before or after the focusing event, I included the goal of the party that an individual politician was affiliated with as another independent variable, as well as an interaction term for the party goal and the time point of the post. Three party-specific factors are strongly associated with whether a party is considered rather policy-seeking or rather office-seeking. The three factors are the general policy position of a party (e.g., on a left-right scale), its level of intra-party democracy, and its size (e.g., in terms of seats in parliament; Helboe Pedersen, 2012; Wagner and Meyer, 2014). The seven parties considered in this study were labelled as either policy-seeking or office-seeking according to these factors (Appendix A.6): Politicians from the CDU, CSU, SPD and FDP were considered rather office-seeking, while politicians from the AfD, LINKE and Greens were seen as rather policy-seeking. However, because parties regularly mix office- and policy-seeking behavior, the two behaviors are not always mutually exclusive, and the party-specific factors provided a partially mixed picture, additional models were fitted. In one of them, the Greens were considered office-seeking as well, in another one the FDP (and the Greens) was coded as rather policy-seeking party (see Appendix A.1). Results with such alternative divisions, however, showed no noteworthy difference (compare footnote 18).

[12] For the statistical analysis, R (Version 4.2.2.) and package 'nlme' (Pinheiro et al., 2021) were used.

[13] The alternative, random-intercept random-slope models, additionally allow the effect of the event NYE (the slope) to vary for individual politicians. These models would make theoretical sense, ANOVAs comparing model fit however showed that these never performed better than the random-intercept only models. Thus, only random-intercept models are presented. For the comparison of the two types of models, both Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) and Schwarz's Bayesian Criterion (BIC) *goodness-of-fit* statistics were considered. All calculated ANOVAs are provided in the associated R Scripts, see remarks on Appendix A.1.

2.3 Results

Since this study represents the first large-scale manual annotation of politicians' deservingness frames concerning refugees, a more detailed than usual presentation of descriptive results is warranted. This is followed by the presentation of the analytical results.

2.3.1 Descriptive Results

First of all, the three dimensions of deservingness that are used most by politicians in my sample, are also those that are most important to the wider public and that frequently show in other empirical work on deservingness perceptions (Figure 1.2): Deservingness frames based on *need* appear most often (33.68%), followed by those on *universalist arguments* of deservingness (22.88%). Interestingly, next to *reciprocity* frames (9.37%), also frames in the dimension of the *legality argument* are frequently made (11.23%). As this latter frame emerged inductively as a result of the coding process, no prior hypothesis was formulated for it.

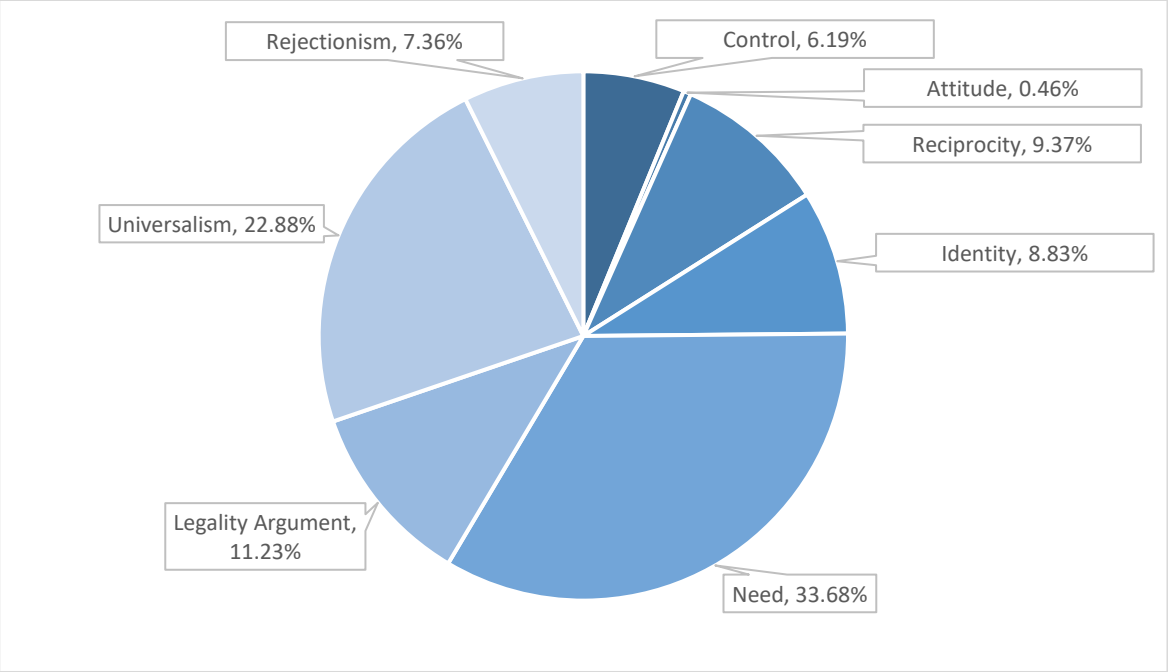
Before examining the usage of individual dimensions, notable similarities and differences in how politicians from different parties frame refugees as deserving or undeserving are identified (Figure 1.3).[14] Politicians from left, rather refugee-friendly parties[15], appear to behave very similarly: Both before and after NYE 2015/16, these politicians most often highlight the deservingness of refugees, instead of their undeservingness. Instead of barely ever highlighting undeservingness, they seem to rather resort to ambiguous messaging.

On the other side, politicians from the FDP, CDU and AfD appear to somewhat reduce their framing of refugees as deserving in the aftermath of the event – and then also result to ambiguous messaging. Only the CSU seems to actually increase its focus on undeservingness of refugees after NYE 2015/16.

[14] Coded posts could highlight deservingness, undeservingness, or include focus on both of these. Posts about both deservingness and undeservingness were first coded 'ambiguous' and later categorized as 'NA', due to the requirement for numeric variables in the statistical models. Consequently, the number of observations is smaller for the analyses of frame valence.

[15] In the following left, rather refugee-friendly parties are considered to be the LINKE, Greens and SPD, and conservative and right-wing parties, those that are rather refugee-critical, are considered to be the FDP, CDU, CSU and AfD (compare Lehmann et al., 2024; Mader and Schoen, 2019).

Figure 1.2 – Share of Individual Dimensions of All Frames Coded. Coding on all posts three months before and after NYE 2015/16.



The pattern of seemingly similar behavior among left parties and the more diverse reactions among right and conservative parties extends also to the usage of the different deservingness dimensions (see Figure 1.4).[16] Firstly, almost all politicians greatly emphasize the deservingness of refugees in terms of their need, with, for instance, posts like the following:

> "After 5 years of war in Syria, donor countries are massively increasing aid for #refugees. Long overdue (…)" (own translation, original Twitter Post of the FDP Party Account, February 4th, 2016, 03:12 pm).

For politicians from left, rather refugee-friendly parties, need is the most important dimension (except for a slight shift in the SPD after NYE 2015/16). This is surprisingly also the case for the FDP, the CSU, and, slightly less, for the CDU after NYE 2015/16. All in all, the overall relevance of the need dimension appears greater for rather refugee-friendly parties.

Secondly, for refugee-friendly parties, the universalist argument is used continuously second most frequently. Thus, parties on the left repeatedly favor support measures for refugees that are not attached to any preconditions, for example:

[16] To improve presentation, posts on the *attitude* dimension are excluded for lack of empirical relevance (n = 5).

Figure 1.3 – Proportionate Framing of Refugees as Deserving or Undeserving by Parties, Before and After NYE 2015/16.

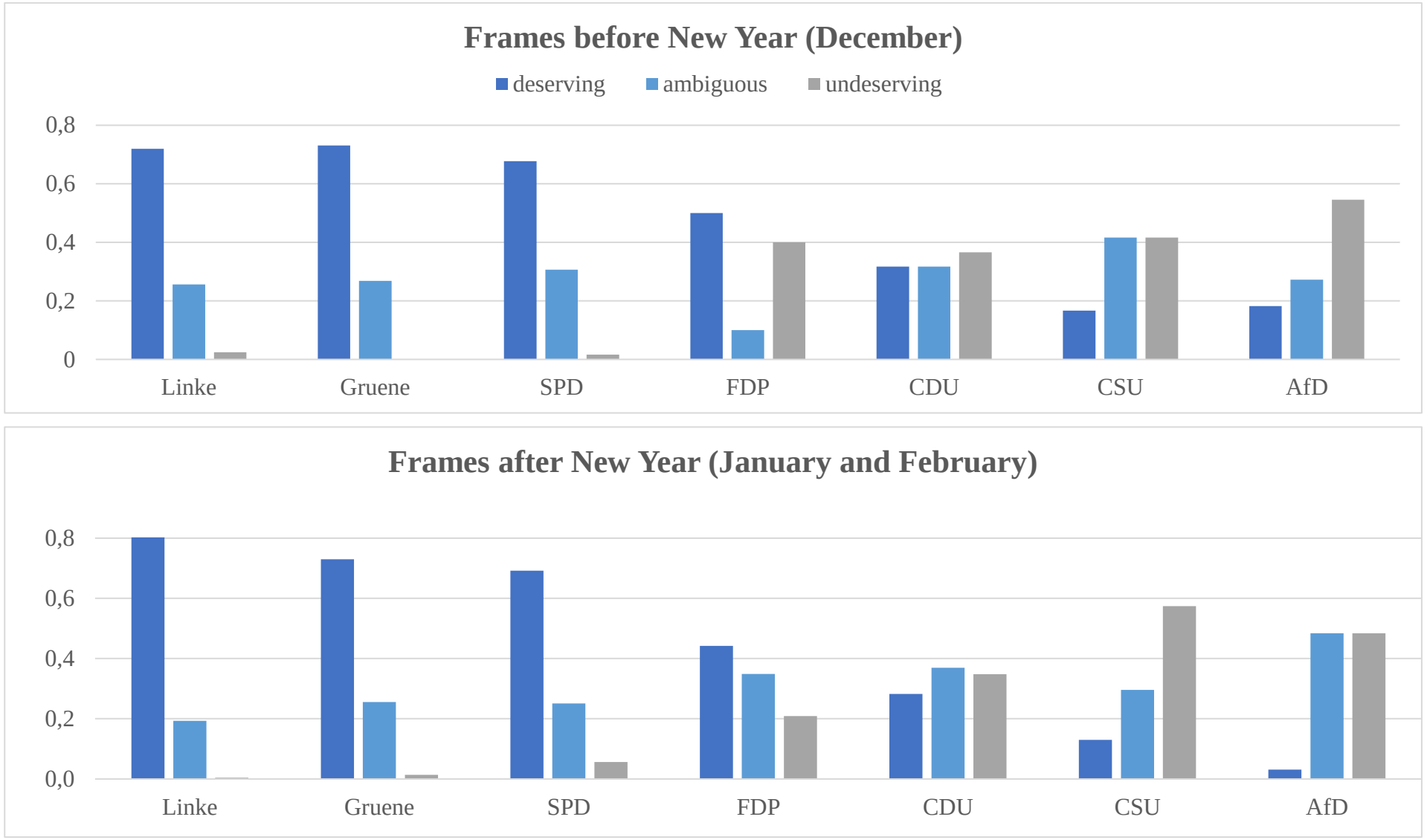
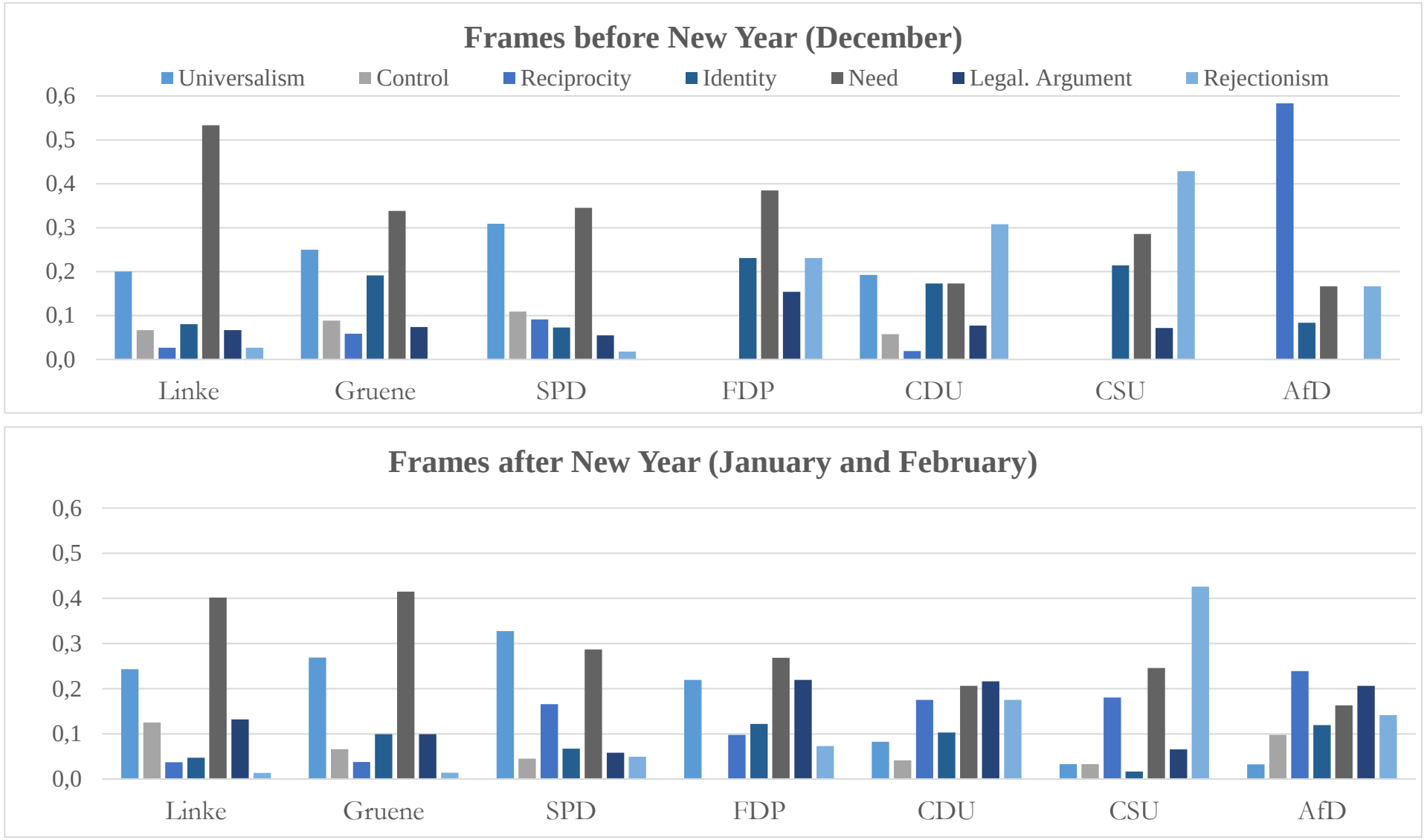


Figure 1.4 – Proportionate Usage of Deservingness Frames by Parties, Before and After NYE 2015/16.



> "(…) He [Sigmar Gabriel, *author's note*] tries to create the impression that overdue social investments are a matter of distribution between Germans and refugees, even though the matter is quite simple: Social justice is a question of distribution between the rich and the poor, regardless of origin (…)" (own translation, original Facebook Post of then party leader Katja Kipping (LINKE), February 28th, 2016, 01:02 pm).

For refugee-critical parties, overall, this argument plays a rather small role; the more right-wing CSU and the even more right AfD barely use it. However, surprisingly, for the center-right CDU it is the second most prominent deservingness dimension before, but not after NYE 2015/16. For the liberal FDP, it is the tied-second most frequently used frame after NYE 2015/16.

With respect to one of their overall most important deservingness arguments, rejectionism, the four rather refugee-critical parties again diverge from each other: While, at first, the CDU, FDP and, especially, the CSU demand that refugees be refused benefits no matter what, this argument loses relative importance for the CDU and FDP after NYE 2015/16, but remains important for the CSU. For politicians from the AfD, rejectionism plays a secondary role – though among all deservingness dimensions, it is relatively more important to the AfD than it is to all rather refugee-friendly parties. These barely use rejectionism frames at all. An example of the rejectionism argument is the following post:

> "@c_linder [party head Christian Lindner of the FDP, *author's note*]: Federal Government must initiate shift in #refugee_policy with the goal of reducing the numbers (…)" (own translation, original Twitter Post of the FDP Party Account, December 10th, 2015, 09:33 am).

For the AfD, instead of rejectionism, granting or withholding support measures based on (reciprocal) behavior of refugees is prominently highlighted and their most important dimension. After NYE 2015/16, reciprocity also increases in importance for the other refugee-critical parties (CDU, CSU and FDP). This is also the case for the SPD, but not for the other rather refugee-friendly parties.

As with reciprocity, after NYE 2015/16, the legality argument gains in relevance for refugee-critical parties; and even becomes the most prominent dimension in the CDU. Also, it is the second most and tied-second most invoked dimension of deservingness for the AfD and the

FDP after NYE 2015/16. For rather refugee-friendly parties, again, it plays a secondary role, albeit it carries a certain significance for the LINKE.[17]

All in all, the rather refugee-friendly parties (LINKE, Greens, SPD) frame refugees' deservingness very uniformly, focusing on their need and universalist entitlements. Simultaneously, the framing of refugees by these parties' individual politicians appear to be rather unaffected by the events of NYE 2015/16. Politicians from rather refugee-critical parties communicate more mixed. Here, need and rejectionism, but also reciprocity and legalist arguments are important. Also, broadly speaking, framing patterns of the FDP and CDU appear to converge more than those of the even more refugee-critical CSU and AfD. Overall, for these parties, the former two dimensions (slightly) decrease in importance after the focusing event, while at the same time the latter two seem to become more important. These descriptive insights, both on the highlighting of (un-) deservingness and on frame dimension usage are examined more systematically in the following.

2.3.2 Analytical Results

Models 1-4, depicted in Table 1.1, provide the multilevel linear regressions of the frame valence (Model 1), and the deservingness dimensions need (Model 2), the universalist argument (Model 3), and reciprocity (Model 4), on whether the post was uploaded before or after NYE 2015/16. These are the most direct tests of Hypotheses 1-4. Models 5-8 include the predominant party goals of the parties the post authors are affiliated with (rather office-seeking / rather policy-seeking) as additional explanatory variable. Models 9-12 incorporate, further, an interaction of the two explanatory variables. The latter eight models address Hypothesis 5 on whether politicians from parties with different overall party goals vary in their framing of refugees because auf NYE 2015/16.

Model 1 considers the valence of frames, that is whether a post emphasizes the deservingness or the undeservingness of refugees, or whether it is ambiguous. No significant impact of NYE 2015/16 is recorded; the valence of frames did not change over time. Hypothesis 1 therefore has to be rejected.

The same is true for Models 2 and 3 on the need dimension of deservingness (Model 2) and the universalist argument (Model 3). NYE 2015/16 does not have a significant effect in either of the models, meaning that the relevance of frames, both in the need dimension of deservingness

[17] See above for examples of reciprocity frames and the legality argument.

Table 1.1 – Multilevel Linear Models. Standard Errors in parentheses, Significance of coefficients: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

	Model 1. DV: Valence	Model 2. DV: Need	Model 3. DV: Universalism	Model 4. DV: Reciprocity	Model 5. DV: Valence	Model 6. DV: Need	Model 7. DV: Universalism	Model 8. DV: Reciprocity
Time Point after NYE (versus before NYE)	-0.020 (0.020)	0.004 (0.037)	0.039 (0.029)	0.055 (0.022)**	-0.021 (0.020)	0.002 (0.037)	0.039 (0.029)	0.056 (0.022)**
Policy-seeking Party Goal (versus Office-seeking)					0.112 (0.069)	0.145 (0.048)***	0.002 (0.046)	-0.019 (0.037)
Time Point * Party Goal								
(Constant)	0.796 (0.042)***	0.345 (0.038)***	0.201 (0.029)***	0.083 (0.025)***	0.751 (0.050)***	0.280 (0.043)***	0.200 (0.037)***	0.091 (0.028)**
AIC	139.393	1965.141	1364.649	716.289	138.796	1958.362	1366.647	718.027
BIC	158.457	1985.505	1385.013	736.653	162.627	1983.817	1392.102	743.481
Log Likelihood	-65.696	-978.570	-678.324	-354.145	-64.398	-974.181	-678.324	-354.013
Observations	868	1,201	1,201	1,201	868	1,201	1,201	1,201
Number of Groups (Individ. accounts)	75	79	79	79	75	79	79	79

continued Table 1.1 – Multilevel linear models. Standard Errors in parentheses, Significance of coefficients: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01]

	Model 9. DV: Valence	Model 10. DV: Need	Model 11. DV: Universalism	Model 12. DV: Reciprocity
Time Point after NYE (versus before NYE)	-0.047 (0.032)	-0.012 (0.056)	0.032 (0.044)	0.154 (0.033)***
Policy-seeking Party Goal (versus Office-seeking)	0.081 (0.075)	0.127 (0.074)*	-0.007 (0.063)	0.111 (0.051)**
Time Point * Party Goal	0.042 (0.085)	0.024 (0.075)	0.012 (0.058)	-0.171 (0.044)***
(Constant)	0.770 (0.053)***	0.290 (0.054)***	0.205 (0.045)***	0.017 (0.036)
AIC	139.702	1960.261	1368.606	705.124
BIC	168.299	1990.806	1399.152	735.669
Log Likelihood	-63.851	-974.131	-678.302	-346.462
Observations	868	1,201	1,201	1,201
Number of Groups (Individ. accounts)	75	79	79	79

and universalist arguments, did not change because of the event. Hypotheses 2 and 3 therefore also have to be rejected.

Model 4 looks at the deservingness dimension of reciprocity. Here, results indicate that the likelihood that posts were in the reciprocity dimension of deservingness was significantly higher for posts after, than for posts before NYE 2015/16. Hypothesis 4 thus finds support.

Turning to the models including politicians' parties' general goals in terms of office- and policy-seeking as explanatory variable, Models 5 through 7 all confirm the findings of their respective predecessor Models 1 to 3.[18] NYE 2015/16 did not appear to have an effect on framing valence, or the usage of need frames and frames pertaining to universalist arguments. However, politicians from policy-seeking parties were shown to frame refugees significantly more often as (un-) deserving of support because of their need (Model 6).

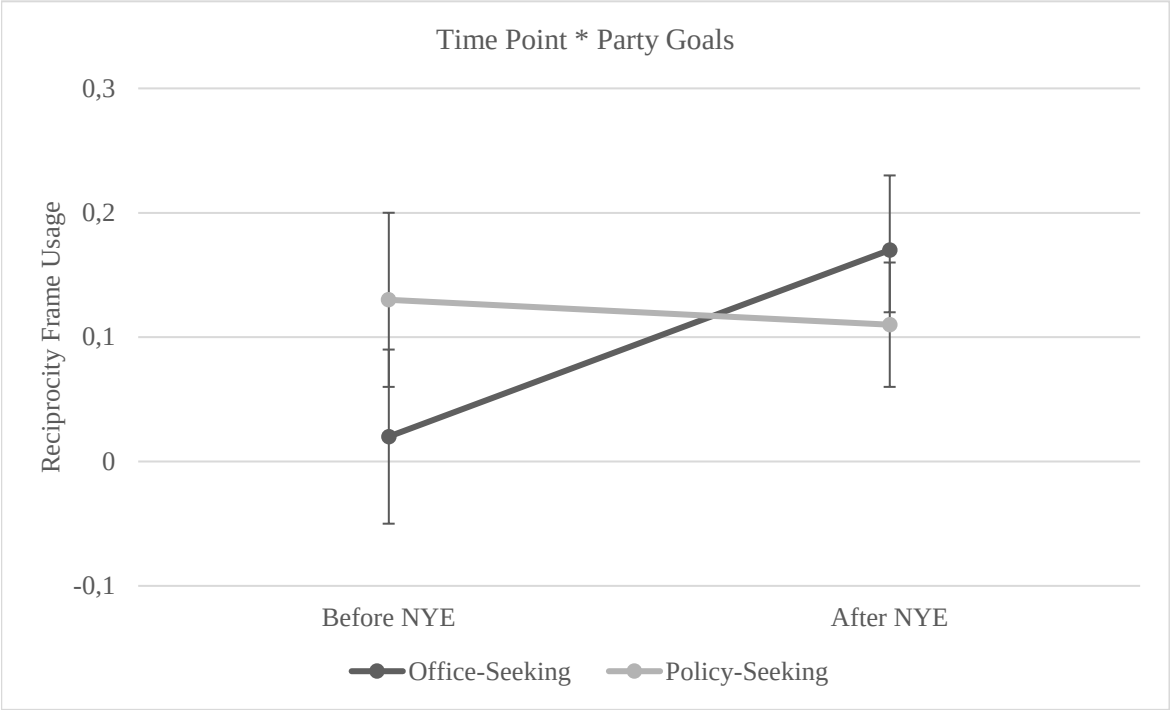
Regarding the reciprocity dimension in Model 8, results again fit indications of the predecessor Model 4 and the descriptive results: Reciprocity frames become significantly more important after NYE 2015/16. Party goals on their own do not impact whether party politicians frame in this dimension more or less often.

Models 9-12, finally, consider whether politicians from parties with different goals changed their framing differently because of the events of NYE 2015/16. In Models 9, 10 and 11, the interaction between the time point regarding NYE 2015/16 and the overall party goal does not reach a statistically significant level. For the valence of frames, and need and reciprocity arguments of deservingness, there is thus no evidence in favor of Hypothesis 5; the focusing event did not affect politicians from parties with diverse overall goals differently with respect to their framing of refugees in these dimensions.

This is different for the use of the reciprocity dimension of deservingness before and after NYE 2015/16 by politicians with different party goals (Model 12). This statistically significant, negative interaction effect is illustrated in Figure 1.5. The figure indicates that politicians from rather office-seeking parties, that is CDU/CSU, SPD and FDP, increase their usage of reciprocity frames in the wake of NYE 2015/16. Politicians from rather policy-seeking parties appear to very slightly decrease their usage in the same time period, however this decrease is

[18] The two alternative division of parties in office- and policy-seeking blocs – one where the Greens are subtracted from the policy-seeking group, one where the FDP is added to it – are tested in Appendix A.1. Results with both alternative divisions closely resemble the results presented here, with the first-mentioned, alternative division slightly weakening, and the other alternative division slightly reinforcing results.

Figure 1.5 – Two-way Interaction Effects between the Time Point Regarding the Focusing Event and Politicians' Party Goals. Attached standard errors.



not statistically significant. Overall, this finding highly fits Hypothesis 5, so that – in this instance – Hypothesis 5 must not be rejected.

2.4 Discussion and Outlook

In the study at hand, I presented an analysis of the first large-scale manually-annotated corpus of deservingness frames of politicians, here, on refugees. Politicians' framing strategies were thereby particularly scrutinized in relation to a focusing event, New Year's Eve 2015/16. The results of the study and data effort are multifaceted and contribute in two ways: On the one hand, they provide descriptive evidence on the effective usage of deservingness frames by politicians. On the other hand, they add insights to the wider literature on elite political communication, behavior and party goals, particularly in the context of focusing events.

Regarding the first contribution, politicians appeared to frame refugees as (un-) deserving in accordance with their more general positions toward them. Left, rather refugee-friendly politicians laid more focus on deservingness, while conservative and right-wing, rather refugee-critical politicians highlighted refugees' undeservingness much more. Interestingly, it appears that the focusing event resulted in much more ambiguous framing, especially for right parties. Politicians thereby seemed to avoid outright attributions of undeservingness and instead adopted more covert tactics.

Secondly, my data shows that politicians' application of deservingness frames on refugees mirrors that of the wider public: Both the need and the reciprocity dimension of deservingness were found by previous studies to be very important (Czymara and Schmidt-Catran, 2017; Fliethmann et al., 2024), and both of these dimensions were also frequently adopted by politicians around NYE 2015/16. Whether this pattern reflects a particular discourse around refugees, or whether it can be extended to other groups of social beneficiaries, unfortunately lies outside the scope of this study. Given the results of this study and the above-described interdependencies of politicians and public opinion, however, I believe it is reasonable to expect that politicians would debate also other targets of social welfare similarly to the public.[19]

Thirdly, the universalist argument on deservingness bore considerable empirical relevance in my data. Previous studies – with some exceptions (Laenen and Meuleman, 2017; Nielsen et al., 2020) – did not include this argument. This could either be the case because of the unique nature of universal claims to, e.g., support measures, which somewhat transcends the conditional logic

[19] Interestingly, Model 6 also showed that politicians from policy-seeking parties were significantly more likely to use frames in the need dimension (this effect vanished in Model 10, that included the interaction term). This might be because both the LINKE and Greens were considered policy-seeking parties. Politicians from these parties were both generally highly active in posting and used the need dimension most frequently. The AfD was also considered a policy-seeking party, however it contributed considerably less posts overall to the analysis.

inherent in deservingness arguments. The argument may therefore simply have been overlooked by previous researchers. Alternatively, it may be the case that the universalist argument is predominantly employed by politicians and not the wider public, which is why it was found primarily in a sample of politicians' statements on deservingness. However, this appears unlikely for two reasons. First, the argument was, by a significant margin, the second most frequently used frame in my data making it unlikely that only politicians would employ it. Second, the argument has also appeared in previous research on public opinion (see above), suggesting its relevance beyond just elite political discourse. All in all, an important takeaway from this study is that the universalist argument should be considered and included in future studies.

Fourthly, in this study I established the relevance of an additional argument of deservingness that did not fit previous classifications: the legality argument. This argument implies conditionality on what is put down in the law. Laws vary and conditionality in laws can be based on the degree of neediness of targets, some form of reciprocal behavior, or some other aspects. Going forward, arguments pertaining to the law could thus either be incorporated by getting to the bottom of what is in the law and then classifying these arguments about conditional welfare based on legal provisions according to the existing deservingness dimensions. Or, the legality argument could be adopted in other contexts too. This, apart from reasons of practicality, could pick up on interesting implications of the usage of this argument: On the one hand, an individual who verbally conditions support on legal requirements signals law-abidingness. On the other hand, s/he does not make the reasons for why support should be granted or withheld explicit. Especially for politicians, keeping quiet about the precise, and often emotionally arousing reasons for why a support measure should not be provided to certain parts of a social group might be an attractive communication strategy to choose. Referring to the law, in this case, might equal hiding behind the law. Therefore, scholars of political communication might be interested in picking up on such rhetorical strategies of politicians, particularly in the realm of the controversial issue of targeted welfare.

Finally, in my sample, also rejectionist frames played a noticeable empirical role. The usage of such frames helps to display that my chosen method of focusing on deservingness frames was well-equipped to find subtle differences in communication between different parties. This dimension picked up on the high-profile controversy between the two governing sister parties CDU and CSU. At the time, the CSU was heavily promoting their idea of an 'upper limit' ("Obergrenze") policy. Such a policy would have led to a rejection of refugees after a certain

amount *no matter what*. The CSU's sister party, the CDU was highly critical of this idea. This 'rejectionist' idea is reflected in the data by the continuously exceptionally high importance of rejectionism frames for the CSU; and their much smaller relevance for the CDU.

Regarding the second contribution of the study, its contributions to the wider literature on elite political communication, party goals and focusing events, my results provide a mixed picture: Firstly, I had to reject Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 on frame valence and the need and universalism dimensions. Politicians did not change their framing in these aspects as a result of the focusing event. This fits the policy-seeking perspective. In contrast to this finding however, secondly, Hypothesis 4 on reciprocity frames did find support; politicians' increase in focus on (negative) reciprocal behavior of refugees matched the disruptive events of NYE 2015/16, rather indicating an office-seeking perspective of elite political communication.

To make sense of the seeming contradiction between these two initial findings, it is helpful to consider, thirdly, the results regarding Hypothesis 5 on the moderation of politicians' reactions to NYE 2015/16 by their parties' overall goals. Focusing on the significant interaction effect in the reciprocity dimension, it became apparent that this was indeed driven by more usage of reciprocity frames by politicians from rather office-seeking parties. That a significant interaction was found in regard to specifically this dimension might thereby be the crux of the matter: reciprocity frames were strongly correlated with negative valence (see Appendix A.1). This means that it was more likely for refugees to be framed as *undeserving* of support because of, e.g., a lack of reciprocity or because of negative behavior, than it was for refugees to be framed as *deserving* of support because of reciprocal behavior (recall the examples above). The dimensions in which no change in framing because of the focusing event and no moderation by party goals was recorded, the need and the universalist dimensions, were on the other hand strongly correlated with positive valence (see Appendix A.1). It might therefore be that politicians from office-seeking parties do react to the focusing event, but that they do so very cautiously: Instead of a drastic turn against refugees, changes are subtle and occur through an increase of frames in a dimension of arguments that is already very prominent and that is commonly used for illustrating refugees' undeservingness. Increases in this dimension are thus not that disruptive and might not appear as a too drastic turn on policy – while they simultaneously show a conceivable reaction to the disturbing focusing event.

Such an interpretation also fits the descriptive evidence on how the event effected the valence framing. At least for some parties, a superficial turn to more ambiguous framing after NYE

2015/16 was identified. This seems indicative for the tentative reaction to the event by increases in reciprocity frames only.

Cautious behavior by office-seeking politicians is further confirmed by qualitative screening of some of the posts. In the following post, the politician from the rather office-seeking CSU is keen to frame his emphasis of the reciprocity dimension as a *continuation* of prior policy positions:

> "Already before the attacks on women on New Year's Eve, the CSU parliamentary group advocated that asylum seekers who commit crimes (…) forfeit their right to stay with us. (…) We owe a strict approach not only to our own population (…)" (own translation, original Facebook Post of the MP Michael Frieser (CSU), January 13th, 2016, 06:00 am).

Summing up, the results of this study together form the conclusion that, even in the face of a focusing event, politicians are mindful to communicate policy-seeking positions. While NYE 2015/16 was addressed to a certain degree, opinions and political stances voiced by politicians were predominantly framed as continuations of prior policy positions. And, if politicians from office-seeking parties did alter their framing, this was done very cautiously.

That being said, there are few scope conditions of this study that should be mentioned: For one, refugees and their deservingness were a highly salient public issue during the considered timeframe. While focusing events will necessarily always raise the salience of certain problems, this may play out differently depending on the prior salience of the issues in focus. This is the case because it might be easier for politicians to change their stance on issues that previously had a low public profile. Reputational costs might appear smaller for politicians, if their previous positions on an issue were less well-known, and such events might exhibit changes in framing more easily. Investigating the role of different prior public saliences of a given issue for how focusing events change political communication is thus an avenue for future research.

For another, New Year's Eve 2015/16 might not have been the most disruptive focusing event possible because the issue of refugees was already highly salient at the time. With the 'European Refugee Crisis' dominating public discourse in Germany, both citizens and politicians may not have perceived the event as profoundly perturbing as they might have otherwise. Additionally, the facts surrounding the event were unclear then and remain so today, which may have made the political elite hesitant to shift their communication significantly, or at least not as much as they might have in response to a different focusing event. Future studies should therefore turn

to potentially even more disruptive events. Nevertheless, the event had a certain discursive impact which is the reason why it was chosen as study subject.

And, as a final scope condition, in this study I focused on political communication and not on actual policy reactions to the event. Political communication regularly affects the on-the-ground situation much less than implemented government policies – although shifts in it can be considered a precursor of policy change. Tracing policy change as consequences of focusing events is however difficult, given that, e.g., new laws take a considerable time to come into effect. Also, normally only government parties implement policies. Therefore, in studies on policy reactions to events, the behavior of politicians from opposition parties would probably be overlooked. Finally, if the government were to implement a new policy as a result of a focusing event, it would still be highly difficult to recognize whether this was done for office-seeking or policy-seeking reasons: naturally, an implemented new policy would appear to reflect the policy goals of politicians. However, if it were the product of a focusing event, it might have come about to a much larger part also because of dominant public sentiment and thus reflect office-seeking behavior. Against this backdrop, this study's focus on political communication again seems to be more adequate to get at the calculus behind elite political behavior. Nevertheless, policy reactions would be important to take into account to discern the full relevance of focusing events. Perhaps, a focused study on the communication surrounding a relevant policy in the aftermaths of a focusing event, e.g., on the 'upper limit' policy mentioned above, could thereby be interesting.

For the time being, however, this study provides evidence that politicians' opinions are not as easily swayed as those of the public. Office-seeking politicians are more likely to react to focusing events, however only in a very restricted way. In view of the present rise of populist politics, such apparent stability and consistency is good news.

3. Study 2 – Deservingness Perceptions Toward Refugees – A Gender Perspective

with *Verena Seibel* and *Daniel Degen*[1]

Abstract: Refugee men are found to be less deserving of government support than refugee women. However, is this still the case if they engage in economic reciprocal behavior and attitudes? Following theories on gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism, we argue that economic activity is expected less of female than of male refugees and that this translates into gendered perceptions of deservingness of financial support. Analyzing data from a 2016 factorial survey experiment in Germany, we show that male refugees are more likely to get "punished" if unwilling to work. Future studies should thus include gender-related aspects when assessing deservingness perceptions.

Keywords: Deservingness, Refugees, Gender, Stereotype, Benevolent Sexism, Factorial Survey Experiment

[1] This study was main-authored by me and has been published in Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies at https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2024.2356664. The Declaration of Authorship at the end of this dissertation lists how responsibilities between the authors were divided.

3.1 Introduction

Public opinion polls and previous research on deservingness perceptions toward refugees suggest that the gender of refugees matters: female refugees are oftentimes perceived to be more deserving of support (e.g., Bansak et al., 2016) and have higher success rates in asylum applications than male refugees (Mascini and van Bochove, 2009; Plümper and Neumayer, 2021). Frequently, this phenomenon can be attributed to the prevalence of certain traits among female refugees that enhance their eligibility for successful asylum applications, such as originating from countries with heightened insecurity or being accompanied by dependent children (Mascini and van Bochove, 2009; Plümper and Neumayer, 2021). However, our understanding of the extent to which the gender of refugees also influences people's deservingness perceptions when it comes to *financial support* from the government is limited.

Refugees' gender might be particularly relevant in the assessment of their deservingness for financial support, simply because finances and peoples' attitudes toward them are strongly gendered (Ellemers, 2018), with men being considered mainly responsible for securing financial stability, and women not. Also in the refugee context, research shows that refugee women are often perceived as vulnerable, while male refugees are considered to be responsible for providing for themselves and their families (Ellemers, 2018; Glick and Fiske, 1997). Our first research question therefore is to what extent refugees' gender influences people's deservingness perceptions regarding financial support. Based on theoretical elaborations on gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism (Ellemers, 2018; Glick and Fiske, 1997), we expect that people perceive female refugees as more deserving of financial support than male refugees.

However, the potential gender gap in perceived deservingness of financial support might be even larger if refugee men do not engage in economic reciprocal behavior and attitudes. Reciprocity in terms of "paying back economically" has been found to play a significant role in shaping people's deservingness perceptions: people tend to perceive others as more deserving if they have engaged in economic reciprocal behavior in the past or are willing and able to do so in the future (Bansak et al., 2016; van Oorschot, 2000); however, given the gendered dynamic of economic behavior (Ellemers, 2018), people might hold different expectations toward refugee women than refugee men in this regard. Following the theories on gender stereotypes (Ellemers, 2018; Glick and Fiske, 1997), we expect the gap in deservingness perceptions in favor of refugee women to be even greater when comparing female and male refugees who do not engage in economic reciprocal behavior and attitudes. Or, in other words,

we anticipate male refugees to receive a higher penalty for not engaging in reciprocal economic behavior than female refugees.

We address our research questions by means of a factorial vignette survey, which we conducted in four major cities within West Germany: Hamburg, Munich, Stuttgart, and Düsseldorf. In this vignette study, we confronted each respondent with a total of seven hypothetical refugees. Each fictitious refugee thereby varied on eight randomly modified attributes that cued different "deservingness criteria" (van Oorschot, 2000), importantly gender, education, language skills, and efforts to find a job. Respondents were asked to evaluate to what extent they perceive a given amount of financial support provided by the government for each fictitious refugee as fair, too little or too much. These overall assessments inform us about direct effects of each individual attribute on deservingness evaluations. In addition, we are able to show how the interplay between refugee's gender and refugee's economic reciprocal behavior and attitudes shape people's deservingness perceptions of financial support.

Our contribution to the field is three-fold: First, we expand the existent literature on deservingness perceptions by focusing on financial support as a crucial social policy instrument, designed to reduce economic inequality between natives and refugees. Second, we explore the role of gender in this regard. While there are several scientific accounts for gendered images of refugees, the empirical evidence of the relevance of gender for public perception concerning financial support lacks scrutiny. In quantitative studies more generally addressing the topic of deservingness, the gender of refugees is often only mentioned as a side note (compare Bansak et al., 2016; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015; Kootstra, 2016), with no theoretical elaboration (for a notable exception see Welfens, 2023). This is surprising given that "gender is considered a primary feature in person perception" (Ellemers, 2018, p. 277), and widespread overall gender stereotypes – for instance on economic activities – may, therefore, also apply in an adapted form to the social group of refugees. Third, we examine the role of gender in relation to reciprocity, one of the most relevant concepts in the deservingness literature (van Oorschot, 2000). We thus contribute to a better understanding on how refugee's gender shapes people's deservingness perceptions regarding financial support and how gender interlinks with other relevant deservingness criteria, such as reciprocity.

3.1.1 Attitudes toward Refugees and Perceived Deservingness

Recent political events such as the "European Migration Crisis" of 2015 as well as the more recent war in Ukraine have led to the largest influx of refugees to Germany and the broader

European Union since World War II (Dumont and Scarpetta, 2015). These developments have been accompanied by an ever-extending body of research on attitudes toward refugees and migrants. Studies thereby focus on attitudes toward different *measures of support* provided to *different minority groups* such as refugees and migrants. Work on refugees, for example, examines people's attitudes toward granting asylum and admitting candidates to the country (Bansak et al., 2016; Hager and Veit, 2019; Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015). Other studies focus on general assistance programs that other parts of the population receive as well, such as unemployment benefits (Reeskens and van der Meer, 2018) or direct financial aid (Kootstra, 2016). The latter measure is thereby particularly interesting to investigate, as money is and always has been a very personal issue reflecting power relations and perceptions of worth (LeBaron et al., 2019; Vogler, 1998) and it is, therefore, likely that people are particularly sensitive toward it. To date, however, we do not actually know which forms of financial support for refugees are perceived as fair. In this study, we thus asked respondents to evaluate whether they consider a certain refugee to be deserving of a certain amount of money (see below).

People thereby make their deservingness perceptions dependent on personal characteristics of the group in question (refugees in our case). The well-known framework of "Deservingness Criteria" (van Oorschot, 2000) is prominently used to derive theoretical expectations on who is perceived as deserving of a certain measure of support and who is not. Van Oorschot (2000) thereby distinguishes between five forms of criteria that influence people's deservingness perceptions: the extent to which individuals have *control* over their situation, their *attitude* toward the support received, their shared *identity*, the level of *need* for support, and the level of *reciprocity* in terms of ability and willingness to "pay back" to society, but also to the welfare regime that provides the initial support. In this study, we focus on the deservingness criterion named last, reciprocity. We argue that reciprocity, in particular *economic* reciprocity, is crucial for our understanding of gendered deservingness perceptions concerning financial support. We specifically look at refugee's ability and willingness to participate in the labor market and thus reciprocate the financial support granted by the government of the country of residence. Our definition of reciprocity thereby closely matches the criterion "effort" coined by Knotz et al. (2022), which describes only current and future reciprocal behavior, instead of such behavior as well as reciprocal behavior in the past. Yet, we refer to the more commonly used and more generally understandable term "reciprocity."

3.1.2 Gender Within the Refugee Context

There is good reason to believe that citizens perceive male refugees differently than female refugees with regard to their deservingness of financial support. Next to the rich work on gender within the global and humanitarian context (Grewal and Kaplan, 2006), previous work has elaborated on stereotypical images of women, and refugee women in particular: while female Muslim refugees are seen through a lens of Orientalism as dependents (Akram, 2000) and are frequently discerned as vulnerable and therefore in need of support (Ayoub, 2017; Baklacioğlu, 2017), there are further, very real, gender-specific threats female refugees face that are not yet adequately addressed by international regimes (Akram, 2013). Such images contribute to forming people's perceptions of female refugees. Also, public images of men being "positioned as 'bad' refugees who are only able to acquire respectability by manifesting their innocence" (Holzberg et al., 2018, p. 546) while women and children are seen as "good" refugees, have been highlighted (Holzberg et al., 2018). Such images portray male refugees either as a threat (Rettberg and Gajjala, 2016) or as providers for their families (Ellemers, 2018; Glick and Fiske, 1997) and, hence, as the more active part responsible for protection, and thus less deserving of support from the outside (Rettberg and Gajjala, 2016).

Theoretically, these gendered ascriptions can be explained by gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism. Stereotypes are complexity-reducing "aides to explanation" and "energy-saving devices" (McGarty et al., 2002b, p. 2). Similar to cognitive heuristics, they are automatically activated and influence perceptions and behavior even when individuals cognitively disagree with their contents (Devine, 1989), or when they are inaccurate (McGarty et al., 2002a). Gender stereotypes reflect general expectations about men and women within a given society (Ellemers, 2018): Whereas women are expected to be warm and caring, men are expected to lead and provide for their family. Further, gender stereotypes influence all kinds of aspects of gendered life such as the work-care division, quality of leisure time, but also the question of both male and female employment (Ecker et al., 2020; Fischer and Anderson, 2012; González et al., 2019; LeBaron et al., 2019; Yerkes et al., 2020).

Importantly, gender stereotypes have been found to serve as the main basis for benevolent sexism (Glick and Fiske, 1997). In contrast to hostile sexism, which views women as subordinate and of less worth than men, benevolent sexism expresses itself more positively: it holds a romanticized view of traditional gender roles and thus encourages behavior to these ends in a positive way. Benevolent sexism is thereby reflected in a form of protective

paternalism, which ascribes women weaker gender roles, according to which they are in need of protection, and which frames men as those "protectors" and as "providers for women" (Glick and Fiske, 1997, p. 122).

Regarding female refugees, benevolent sexism might play a particularly important role: For one, female refugees are oftentimes described as especially vulnerable and dependent, not only during their flight but also once arriving in their respective host countries (Ayoub, 2017; Baklacioğlu, 2017; Freedman, 2017). For another, the broad knowledge of female refugees' vulnerability leads to diverse consequences for them. In the medical context in the United Kingdom for instance, practitioners strategically draw on images of female refugees' and migrants' essentialized vulnerability to campaign for better conditions and more money devoted to their medical treatment (Mesarič and Vacchelli, 2021). Greater perceived neediness and vulnerability of female refugees is also indicated by the fact that fleeing from a country with dreadful human rights violations favors female candidates with regard to their asylum application recognition – these crimes have to reach a considerable severity before they develop a positive effect also on male refugees' asylum applications (Plümper and Neumayer, 2021). Additionally, Mascini and van Bochove (2009) explain the higher rate of asylum application successes of female refugees not with objective characteristics of candidates, but rather with stereotypical images of these. Reviewing data from the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service, they argue that female refugees are more likely to display characteristics resulting in an image of "defenseless victims" (Mascini and van Bochove, 2009, p. 118). If, across society, refugee women are perceived more vulnerable than refugee men, we can reasonably assume that refugee women are also perceived as more deserving of assistance measures, i.e., financial support.

So far, the linkage between gender and deservingness evaluations of financial support has not been thoroughly empirically clarified. Previous, quantitative research, focusing solely on the role of gender in public assessments of refugees' deservingness of support, has returned mixed results: For one, Bansak et al. (2016) studied the acceptance of voters in different European countries to receive refugees into their country and found that female refugees are significantly more accepted than male refugees (see also Hainmueller and Hopkins, 2015). For another however, Kootstra (2016) found a gender effect on the deservingness of financial support only in Great Britain – and not in the Netherlands. Her study, however, only focused on regular migrants and not refugees, a potentially important difference. Hager and Veit (2019) though,

have also argued for a negligible role of gender concerning, in their study, attitudes toward refugees.

We take an opposing stance to the latter findings and argue that in the case of perceptions toward financial support, gender is very likely to matter given its strong interlinkage with power and hierarchies between different genders (LeBaron et al., 2019; Vogler, 1998). On the one hand, it is likely that female refugees are seen as more deserving of financial support due to their feminine weakness." According to this, female refugees are more in need of financial support than male refugees, simply because they are expected to be less able to care and provide for themselves. In contrast, male refugees typically face a more negative perception due to their perceived threat. Thus, we assume that people see male refugees as less deserving of financial support, which leads to our first hypothesis:

> H1: *Female refugees are perceived to be significantly more deserving of financial support than male refugees.*

3.1.3 Gender and Reciprocal Economic Behavior

Perceptions on the question to what extent male and female refugees differ in their deservingness of financial support are likely to be intertwined with people's expectations toward the reciprocal economic behavior and attitudes of refugees. According to the reciprocity argument, people are most willing to grant welfare support to those who have already, or will be contributing to the welfare system (van Oorschot, 2000). The principle of reciprocity might particularly apply to the German case as the German welfare state is primarily contribution- and less solidarity-based: mainly those who contribute in terms of taxes and social security payments will also receive (Leitner and Lessenich, 2003). Also, these institutional specificities of the German welfare state are specifically argued to impact peoples' emphasis on reciprocity (Larsen, 2008).

Recently accepted refugees usually do not have many opportunities to contribute to the welfare system in Germany for a number of reasons: First, most occupations can only be obtained once the asylum request has been accepted – particularly in the first years of the refugee crisis, this procedure was however taking up to 1 year (BAMF, 2016). Second, many refugees – more than regular migrants – struggle with the recognition of their credentials. This happens when, for instance, former employers are also displaced or no longer existent, thus being unable to vouch for the qualifications of their one-time employees (Rietig, 2016). As a consequence, in the years

2015 and early 2016, only around 7% of refugees to Germany from the eight most significant non-European asylum origin countries (around 70% of all asylum seekers in Germany) were employed on the labor market (Brücker, 2018). Thus, around 93% of refugees could not refer to a prolonged employment history within Germany and, therefore, had not yet contributed to the welfare system in terms of taxes or social security contributions – despite an ongoing debate in Germany on how refugees were expected to contribute on the job market (Holzberg et al., 2018).

Seeing that the large majority of refugees had not yet had the chance to contribute to the welfare system at the time of this study, it appears unreasonable to investigate attitudes toward refugees that currently have a job. Rather, indicators of future employment, that is indicators of general *employability*, seem to be more useful attributes to assess refugees' potential of reciprocation. One factor which helps refugees to gain ground on the labor market, is their human capital, particularly their levels of education and their language skills (Hentze and Kolev, 2016). Higher educated refugees are more likely to secure employment in the future more quickly (Hentze and Kolev, 2016), and thus more likely to contribute (more) via taxes and social contributions. Also, language skills matter. Not only are higher levels of language skills positively associated with higher levels of education, they have also been shown to causally benefit the employment chances of refugees (Auer, 2018; Gazzola, 2017).

Previous work also highlights the importance of welfare recipients' human capital as indicator of future reciprocation for perceptions of their deservingness of support. Bansak et al. (2016) find that refugees who have a higher employability in terms of higher language skills, and who have been trained in occupations of higher status are considered more favorably by native-born Germans for acceptance into the receiving country, than refugees who score low on these attributes. Regarding the question of financial support for refugees, it is reasonable to assume similar projections: after all, taxes represent a kind of "return on investment," so that refugees that appear more employable also seem more likely to contribute in the future.

Going further, perceptions of employability will presumably be affected by the welfare recipient's gender. The above-mentioned expectation of males to (economically) provide for their families (Ellemers, 2018; Glick and Fiske, 1997) suggests a special role of gender on the job market. Men's financial obligations extend beyond their nuclear family, wife and children, to include also their parents (Majamaa, 2015). Gendered expectations toward labor market participation are thereby not only linked to direct family obligations, but occur already in early

adulthood (Scholes and McDonald, 2022) and thus impact people's perceptions of gender roles across all life stages.

The labor market pattern among refugees in Germany seems to reflect these gendered expectations: female refugees are 30 percentage points less likely to engage in the labor market than male refugees (Salikutluk and Menke, 2021). In the refugee context, such heightened expectations for males will likely translate into increased demands for the employability of male refugees in the host country. As mentioned earlier, studies on deservingness perceptions have highlighted the importance of reciprocal behavior of refugees and migrants toward the host society for positive evaluations (Bansak et al., 2016; Hager and Veit, 2019; Kootstra, 2016). Through extending benevolent sexism to the context of refugees, we assume that a lower level of human capital has a stronger effect for male refugees than for female refugees: on the one hand, female refugees are not as likely to be "punished" for "negative" characteristics implying low employability, such as low language skills or low levels of education. This is because they are not expected to participate on the labor market. Male refugees, on the other hand, may experience harsher feed-back – that is decreasing deservingness evaluations – for displaying characteristics associated with lower employability, thus contradicting their stereotypical role as providers. We therefore hypothesize the following:

> H2: *A lower level of education has a significantly more negative effect on deservingness perceptions for male refugees than for female refugees.*
>
> H3: *A lower level of language skills has a significantly more negative effect on deservingness perceptions for male refugees than for female refugees.*

Whereas refugees' human capital can be interpreted as an indicator for their ability to integrate into the labor market, their attitudes toward employment can indicate their willingness to integrate and to engage in economic-driven reciprocal behavior. The assumption that immigrants hold opportunistic attitudes toward the welfare state coins public opinion and influences deservingness perceptions concerning immigrants (Koster et al., 2013; Reeskens and van der Meer, 2018). Yet, people's perceptions might change if newcomers signal a willingness to participate on the labor market and, thus, to contribute to the welfare state. Reeskens and van der Meer (2018), for example, find that immigrants who have the intention to find a job on the labor market are perceived as more deserving of receiving unemployment benefits than immigrants who do not state this intention. Such perceptions can reasonably be extended to refugees as well.

Interestingly, a recent study among refugees in Germany shows that over 80% of female refugees "(…) expressed the ambition to take up employment in the future" (Salikutluk and Menke, 2021, p. 302). Yet, the norm to participate on the labor market is gendered: Whereas women experience more fragmented employment trajectories due to child-rearing and other family obligations, men are expected to be constantly active on the labor market and to provide for their family (see for instance Mills et al., 2008). Hence, also for the refugee context, we anticipate that people hold higher expectations about labor market attitudes for male than for female refugees. We argue that because women are still perceived as being mainly responsible for household tasks and childcare, their lack of investment into the job search will probably be "forgiven." Male refugees are, on the other hand, strongly expected to be looking for a job as quickly and as enduringly as possible in order to provide for their families. Hence, we hypothesize that:

> H4: *A lower level of effort to find a job has a significantly more negative effect on deservingness perceptions for male refugees than for female refugees.*

3.2 Methods

To test our hypotheses, we employed a factorial survey experiment, which has two, for us particularly relevant advantages over the use of conventional survey items: First, through the factorial setup, individual attributes are equivalent to treatments in an experimental setting. The attributes are uncorrelated by design so that it is possible to estimate their individual causal impacts on the overall judgment (internal validity). Second, because decisions can only be traced back to individual attributes in the aggregate, social desirability bias for individual respondents is reduced (Mutz, 2011, p. 63). This was of particular significance for our study, because refugees and attitudes toward these are regularly the focal point of highly emotional because refugees and attitudes toward these are regularly the focal point of highly emotional and heated discussions.

3.2.1 Operationalization and Vignette Design

In our factorial survey, each respondent was presented with seven different vignettes, each describing a fictitious refugee. The described refugees thereby varied independently of one another with regard to eight personal characteristics – with an additional number of characteristics being fixed across all vignettes. It was necessary to give such detailed information about the fictitious refugees to ensure that evaluations did not occur based on unfixed, unobservable characteristics that survey respondents came up with themselves for lack of explicit information (see also Reeskens and van der Meer, 2018). Furthermore, and in line with recommendations by the literature, survey respondents should also not be overburdened with too many attitudes toward varying vignette dimensions to take into account. Thus, we alternated a handful of characteristics per vignette and fixed some for all of them (Auspurg et al., 2009): All refugees were described to have been living in Germany for 12 months, and their asylum requests to have already been accepted. Each individual refugee was described to occupy a 1-room apartment financed by the state and to have, at present, no partner or children.[2] Moreover, each refugee was outlined as possessing a work permission but currently being unemployed.

[2] While an investigation of gender stereotypes extended by different family constellations would have been highly interesting to consider, certain compromises with regard to the scope of the vignettes had to be made. Choosing to represent also our female vignette refugees as singles and without children should decrease the likelihood of gender stereotypes illustrating female refugees as needy, given that they are stereotypically associated with childrearing and as traveling after their spouses (see Mascini and van Bochove, 2009). With regard to female refugees we thus utilized a conservative arrangement with respect to our expected effect.

A summary of all *varied* vignette characteristics is provided in Table 2.1. With regard to our hypotheses, we modified vignettes on the following four dimensions: First, the gender of the fictitious refugees was changed between being male or female. As described in H1, we expected female refugees to be perceived as more deserving of financial support than male refugees. Second, vignette refugees' level of education alternated. Higher levels of education are likely to entail greater *employability* and will be impacted by gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism (H2). To better fit our vignette refugees to the German job market, levels of education were either no training (low deservingness), vocational training (medium deservingness), or a university degree (high deservingness). Third, another indication of employability was inserted by the fictitious refugees' capabilities of the German language (H3). Language skills are commonly employed in studies regarding migrants and refugees and are an important characteristic on which refugees are judged (see for instance Bansak et al., 2016; Denney & Green, 2021). We varied language skills on three levels with the fictitious refugees speaking either no (low deservingness), some (medium deservingness), or fluent German (high deservingness). And fourth, we contrasted the *willingness* of vignette refugees to work by portraying them as either looking for a job (high deservingness) or not looking for a job at all (low deservingness; H4).

Beyond these four characteristics, vignette refugees were assigned differing countries of origin, reasons of flight, religious affiliations and ages. The levels of these dimensions are also provided in Table 2.1.

Upon reading the information on individual vignette refugees, respondents were asked to indicate on an 11-point scale to what extent they judged the depicted monthly amount of financial support from the government as far too little, just, or far too much. The monthly amount of financial support thereby varied between 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, and 600 Euros. These amounts cover a certain range below and above the 354 Euros per person per month, that accepted refugees living in regular accommodations (not emergency accommodations such as initial reception facilities) were entitled to in Germany, and which were, at the time, around 12% lower than the level of (minimum) unemployment benefits in Germany ("Arbeitslosengeld II"). However, we did not expect respondents to be strictly aware of the very detailed intricacies of the German Refugees' Benefits Act this amount is based on.

Table 2.1 – Varied Vignette Characteristics and Proposed Amount of Financial Support

Vignette Dimensions	Number of Levels	Levels
Gender	2	Male Female
Level of Education	3	No Training Vocational Training University Degree
Language Skills	3	No German Some German Fluent German
Willingness to Work	2	Is looking for a Job Is not looking for a Job
Country of Origin	3	Syria Eastern Ukraine Eritrea
Reason of Flight	2	Fled because of the Military Conflict Fled because of the bad Economic Situation
Religious Affiliation	3	No Religion Muslim Christian
Age	4	25 years old 35 years old 45 years old 55 years old
Monthly amount of Financial Support	6	100 Euros 200 Euros 300 Euros 400 Euros 500 Euros 600 Euros

An example vignette, translated from the German original, looked like the following. Vignettes in the survey did not appear underscored.

> "A 35-year old man fled Syria because of the military conflict and has been living in Germany for one year.
>
> He is Muslim and speaks nearly no German. He has a university degree and is currently not looking for a job.
>
> He is currently receiving monthly governmental support of 500 Euros for his daily needs (clothing, food etc.)."
>
> Do you perceive this amount as far too little, just, or far too much?

We apply linear regression models (OLS) to our data, given how we operationalize our dependent variable on an 11-point scale. Additionally, our data are hierarchically structured because each respondent rated seven individual vignettes. We, therefore, implement random-intercept models that account for the fact that each judgment of a vignette is nested in respondents (Snijders and Bosker, 1999). However, each judgment can be understood as the result of multiple treatments (the different vignette characteristics) that followed a randomization process. This experimental way of obtaining data means that we do not have to take level differences between respondents into account, and we are, therefore, not required to include fixed-effects into our models. Finally, we reverse the dependent variable to enable a more intuitive interpretation of our results: a larger coefficient now indicates a higher perceived fairness of the allotted amount of money, and thus higher perceived deservingness.

3.2.2 Vignette Sampling

Given the multiple vignette dimensions – each of which varied on at least two levels – we obtained a total of 15,552 hypothetical refugees (vignette universe). Because of this large vignette universe, we applied a fractional design to determine an efficient subsample. We established the vignettes and their clustering in decks by maximizing the D-Efficiency (Auspurg and Hinz, 2015; Dülmer, 2007; Kuhfeld et al., 1994) using the mktex macro provided by Kuhfeld (2010). D-Efficiency is a measure that supports the balancing of the individual vignette dimensions and simultaneously aims at minimizing correlations between those dimensions. For the main effects model, we obtained an excellent D-Efficiency of 99.87%.

Further, survey respondents have been shown to be fatigued or bored by answering an unlimited number of vignettes (Sauer et al., 2011). We, therefore, applied a mixed design (Atzmüller and Steiner, 2010) and limited the number of vignettes presented to respondents to seven. Besides, to avoid ordering effects (Auspurg and Jäckle, 2017), we randomized the arrangement of the vignettes presented to each respondent. We used 20 different decks, each consisting of seven vignettes, thus obtaining multiple judgments for each hypothetical refugee within our subsample.

3.2.3 Respondent Sample

We fielded our survey at the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017 as part of the project Attitudes Toward the Refugee Situation" (Einstellungen zur Fluechtlingssituation [EZFS]). Germany gained significant attention due to its special role during the Refugee Crisis, as it

received one of the largest numbers of asylum applications of all European countries. Consequently, it was strongly confronted with the question of redistributing financial resources toward refugees and examining people's perception of financial support toward refugees is particularly crucial for the German case. Randomly drawn from the register data of local municipalities, we invited 2,000 respondents in four West-German cities (Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Munich, and Stuttgart) to participate in our online survey. A representative sample across Germany was not possible due to budget constraints. We, therefore, decided to focus on four larger cities covering the North, South, and West. Gender stereotypes are less strong among urban than rural citizens in Western Germany (Dirksmeier, 2015). Thus, sampling people living in cities serves as a conservative test of our hypotheses. Cities in East Germany were excluded from the sample due to their very different position in both gender roles and attitudes toward refugees (Talò, 2017). This is a limitation of the study which we further debate in the discussion section. Further, our respondents were more male, slightly younger and slightly more left-leaning than the population mean. Also, respondents in the present sample predominantly possessed qualifications for university entrance and were thus better educated than the overall population.[3] The implications thereof are discussed below.

Of the invited respondents, 28.6%, or a total of 561 participated. Apart from our vignette module with seven descriptions of refugees, respondents were asked some general questions on socio-demographic variables and political attitudes. Finally, after excluding respondents who did not evaluate all assigned vignettes or showed signs of speeding during the survey, we ended up with a total sample of 524 respondents. Given our experimental setup, differences in vignette evaluations from one fictitious refugee's characteristics to another are not based on respondent characteristics; indeed, the different vignette characteristic levels are distributed evenly across various respondent characteristics (see section Randomization Checks in Appendix B.1).

As all respondents in our final sample evaluated seven vignettes each, our number of observations per model, the total number of judged vignette refugees is 3,668.

[3] 57.06% of respondents were male, vis-à-vis around 46.79% in the overall population at that time (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2018). Our sample mean age of 43.26 years was slightly higher than the population mean of 41 years (Destatis, 2023), and indications of political leaning on a 1-11 left-right scale averaged at 3.55 instead of 5.42 in the overall population (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2018). Finally, 82.06% of our respondents possessed qualifications for university entrance, compared to 48.38% in the overall population (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2018).

3.3 Results

Table 2.2 presents the random-intercept linear regression models of the evaluations of the fictitious refugees' deservingness for the indicated amount of money, regressed on all different vignette refugee characteristic variables that could vary between individual vignettes. Model 1 is the basic model, including only direct effects of all varied refugee characteristics. With it we can address our first hypothesis which predicted female refugees to be perceived as more vulnerable and thus to have their deservingness be evaluated significantly more positive than male refugees. Our results show that this is indeed the case: all else equal, female refugees are evaluated significantly more deserving of financial support than male refugees, thus confirming Hypothesis 1.

Our second and third hypotheses stated that a lower level of education (H2) and a lower level of language skills (H3) have a significantly more negative effect on deservingness perceptions for male refugees than for female refugees. Both aspects of human capital signal employability and future reciprocity in terms of taxes and social contributions. Model 1 shows that indeed higher levels of education increase deservingness perceptions in favor of our fictitious refugees: Both Vocational Training and a University Degree have a significant positive effect on how fair the allocated amount of money is assessed to be. Model 2 in Table 2.2 includes a two-way interaction between the gender and the educational level of our fictitious refugees. Only the interaction between gender and Vocational Training – with No Training as the baseline – returns a narrowly significant effect (significant at $p = .1$). This latter effect however comes at the cost of the direct effect of Vocational Training on deservingness evaluations, which becomes non-significant in Model 2. Zooming in even closer on the distinctions between male and female refugees, the illustration of the interaction in Figure 2.1 indicates that certain differences still seem to be made: whereas the difference between female refugees with no education in comparison to those with at least Vocational Training is largest, for male refugees the jump from Vocational Training to a University Degree is more important. These differences are, however, not statistically significant. All in all, respondents considering levels of education appear to differentiate between male and female refugees at best only very slightly. Hence, we have to reject Hypothesis 2.

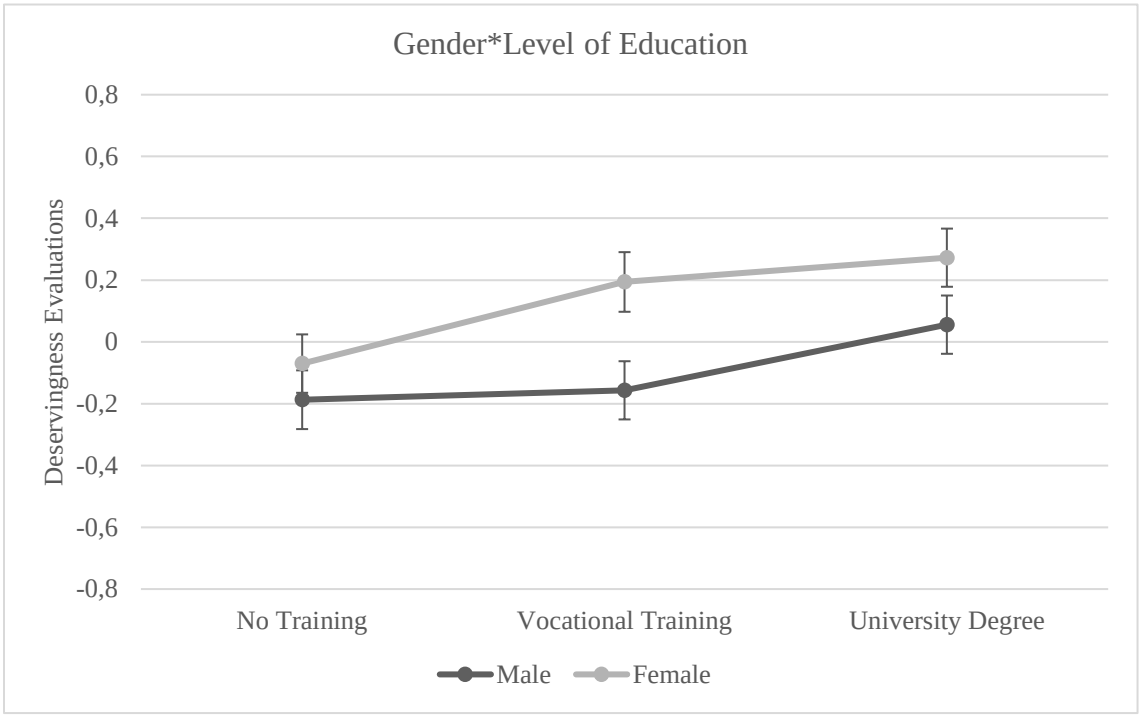
With regard to Hypothesis 3 and the effects of Language Skills, Model 1 shows that refugees with fluent German skills are, as expected, perceived significantly more deserving of financial support in comparison to refugees speaking no German. However, no significant difference was

Table 2.2 – Random-Intercept OLS Regression of Vignette Evaluations on Vignette Characteristics.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Basic Model		Interaction Education		Interaction German Skills		Interaction Job Search	
	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.	Beta	S.E.
Female (vs. male)	0.227	(0.050)***	0.117	(0.093)	0.428	(0.074)***	0.355	(0.091)***
Vocational Training (vs. No Training)	0.145	(0.061)**	0.030	(0.092)	0.146	(0.061)**	0.142	(0.062)**
University Degree (vs. No Training)	0.295	(0.061)***	0.243	(0.091)***	0.291	(0.061)***	0.310	(0.062)***
Some German (vs. No German)	0.074	(0.061)	0.068	(0.061)	0.091	(0.061)	0.163	(0.090)*
Fluent German (vs. No German)	0.180	(0.061)***	0.192	(0.061)***	0.220	(0.062)***	0.285	(0.091)***
Looking for Job (vs. Not Looking)	0.964	(0.050)***	0.965	(0.050)***	1.169	(0.075)***	0.976	(0.050)***
Female*Vocational Training			0.234	(0.140)*				
Female*University Degree			0.100	(0.132)				
Female*Some German					-0.183	(0.135)		
Female*Fluent German					-0.213	(0.138)		
Female*Job Search							-0.407	(0.112)***
Fled from War (vs. For Econ. Reasons)	0.570	(0.050)***	0.567	(0.050)***	0.579	(0.050)***	0.570	(0.050)***
Christian (vs. Muslim)	0.089	(0.061)	0.074	(0.062)	0.091	(0.061)	0.097	(0.063)
No Religion (vs. Muslim)	0.071	(0.061)	0.062	(0.061)	0.067	(0.061)	0.063	(0.061)
From Eastern Ukraine (vs. From Syria)	-0.104	(0.062)*	-0.109	(0.062)*	-0.122	(0.062)**	-0.084	(0.063)
From Eritrea (vs. From Syria)	-0.046	(0.061)	-0.035	(0.062)	-0.066	(0.061)	-0.036	(0.062)
Age	0.004	(0.002)**	0.004	(0.002)*	0.001	(0.002)	0.004	(0.002)*
Money	-0.009	(0.000)***	-0.009	(0.000)***	-0.009	(0.000)***	-0.009	(0.000)***
(Intercept)	2.001	(1.151)***	2.080	(0.161)***	1.980	(0.151)***	1.925	(0.158)***
Observations	3668		3668		3668		3668	
R^2	0.706		0.707		0.707		0.708	
Adjusted R^2	0.705		0.705		0.706		0.707	

*Standard Errors indicated in parentheses, Significance of coefficients: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01*

Figure 2.1– Two-way Interaction Effects Between Gender and Level of Education. Attached Standard Errors.



found between refugees with only a limited command of the German language and refugees with no German language skills. This suggests that our respondents require nothing less than an excellent ability of their (rather difficult) language in order to perceive refugees as deserving of financial support. The interaction between language skills and gender in Model 3 in Table 2.2 yields no significant results. As illustrated in Figure 2.1, barely any differentiations are made for the effects of language skills dependent on the gender of vignette refugees: differing language skills appear to have only a very tentatively stronger effect on male in comparison to female refugees. We, therefore, also have to reject Hypothesis 3.

Finally, Hypothesis 4 suggested that the willingness to find a job – indicated by active efforts to find a job – would play out differently for male and female refugees. For a start, those vignette refugees said to be looking for a job were indeed evaluated to be significantly more deserving of their amounts of allocated money than those, who were described as not looking for a job. Model 4 in Table 2.2 considers the two-way interaction between the refugees' gender and their efforts to find a job. As expected, we find a significantly negative interaction effect, taking female refugees as base category: the direct positive effect on deservingness evaluations of looking for a job, in contrast to not looking for a job, significantly decreases for female refugees

Figure 2.2 – Two-way Interaction Effects between Gender and Language Skills.
Attached Standard Errors.

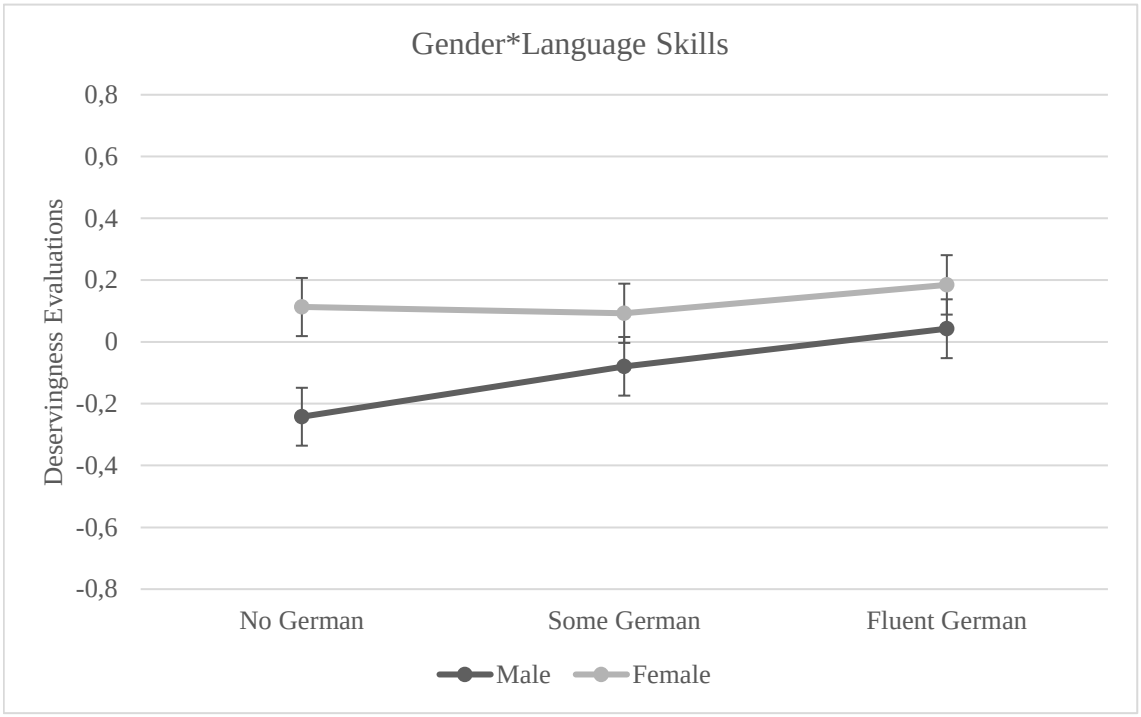
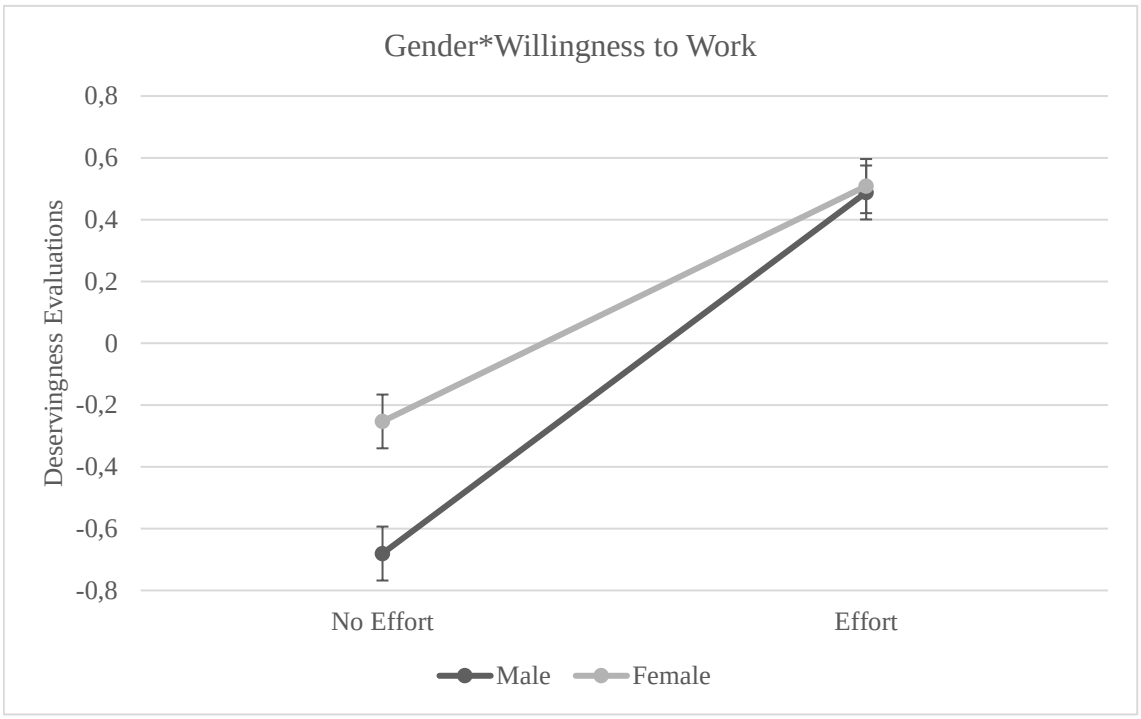


Figure 2.3 – Two-way Interaction Effects between Gender and Willingness to Work.
Attached Standard Errors.



as opposed to male refugees. Zooming in on the precise form of this effect illustrated in Figure

2.3, we see that indeed males are “punished” more for lacking efforts to find a job, than are females. The degree to which the fictitious refugees from the two groups are rewarded for looking for a job is, on the other hand, much closer aligned. Overall, searching for a job vis-à-vis its alternative is thus an action perceived much more important for male than for female refugees – although it is a significant characteristic that strengthens evaluations of deservingness also for female refugees. We thus find evidence for Hypothesis 4.

3.4 Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, we investigated how refugees' gender evokes public approval for financial aid to these refugees. With references to the theoretical concepts of gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism, we expected that people perceive male refugees as less deserving of financial support than female refugees. Moreover, we expected male refugees to be "punished" more for 1) lower levels of education, 2) lower language skills, and 3) expressing no effort to find a job. These latter factors signal a lower employability and a lower willingness to find employment that, for male refugees, can both violate gendered expectations toward male refugees as providers and those considered financially responsible for their families. Simultaneously, these gendered expectations implicate images of (minority) women as vulnerable and in need of financial) support (Ellemers, 2018).

We addressed our hypotheses by means of a factorial survey experiment which provided interesting results: First of all, the gender of the refugee had a direct impact on deservingness evaluations (see also Mascini and van Bochove, 2009; Plümper and Neumayer, 2021). In support of our Hypothesis 1, we found that female refugees are evaluated as more deserving of financial support than male refugees. We tie these results to the stereotypical images of female refugees as particularly vulnerable and more in need of support (Ellemers, 2018), while male refugees are often seen either as a threat (McMahon and Kahn, 2018) or as providers for their families (Ellemers, 2018; Glick and Fiske, 1997) and thus as less deserving.

However, we did not find support for the assumption that male refugees are perceived as less deserving than female refugees if they possess lower levels of education and language skills, signaling lower employability (Hypotheses 2 and 3). While formal education and fluent language skills had a direct positive effect on deservingness evaluations of refugees, this effect is not significantly different for male and female refugees. A possible explanation for these non-findings concerns the fact that education and language skills may express more than potential future reciprocation by refugees: Higher levels of training in terms of education and language skills may also signal better chances of a successful integration into Germany or lower levels of "social distance" (Bogardus, 1959) to German survey respondents and the general German population.[4] Native-born Germans might perceive it as equally important for both male and

[4] This is corroborated by the significant interactions between the different levels of education and German language skills of the refugee (see Model m1education5 in Appendix B.1, and Table B.2.3 and Figure B.2.3 in Appendix B.2).

female refugees to integrate into society, though the reasons might be different for each gender. While human capital might indeed be considered relevant for male refugees because of their increased employability, it might also be seen as important for female refugees, since higher levels of human capital lead to more inter-ethnic contact (Lancee and Seibel, 2014; Seibel, 2020) and more liberal gender role attitudes (Röder and Mühlau, 2014). These integrating factors could be perceived by native-born Germans as equally important for refugee women, particularly if they are expected to raise their children within the new society and are deemed responsible for the transmission of "Western" values. In turn, the expectations could counterbalance the economic expectations toward male refugees – or education and language skills might altogether not be viewed from an economic perspective so that their bare importance as integrating factors were applied equally for male and female refugees.

A final, possible explanation for having to reject Hypotheses 2 and 3 relates to potential limits of gendered stereotypes within society. Previous studies have highlighted such limits for instance vis-à-vis counter-stereotypic traits or individuating information (Andrews, 2017; Santos et al., 2012). The setup of our study described all refugee vignettes as being single and without family obligations. While this was a conscious choice to create a conservative test of the role of gender in deservingness perceptions, it may have affected evaluations of female vignettes differently than of male vignettes, as it might have been taken as a signal that also female refugees should take part in the job market, as they are not confined to care work. Then, because education and language skills may have been rather coarse measures of employability, as just alluded to, this counter-stereotypic information may have somewhat shrunk stereotype effects so that Hypotheses 2 and 3 found no support. However, the counter-stereotypic information provided in the vignette might not have been strong enough to limit stereotype effects regarding Hypothesis 4.

With respect to that final hypothesis, we replicated the results of previous studies, showing that the overall willingness to become employed greatly increases perceived deservingness for our vignette refugees. Even more interestingly, however, we also found evidence that male refugees are "punished" more for lacking efforts to find a job, than female refugees. This strongly corroborates our argument that gender also impacts other deservingness evaluations in the context of refugees.

That being said, there are a few reasons to view these results with a grain of salt, and we want to suggest potential avenues for future research: First, and as mentioned above, our sample was skewed in comparison to the overall German population with regard to age (our sample was

younger), gender (more male), political leaning (more left), and education (better educated). Some additional analyses focusing on respondent characteristics showed that respondent age did not moderate overall attitudes toward the vignette refugees, so that we have no qualms because of this divergence.[5] Concerning the other three respondent characteristics, additional analyses[6] indicate that our sample skewedness provides a conservative estimate of overall effects: respondents that were female, more politically right-leaning and less well educated were all more likely to drive the results supporting our hypotheses. For instance, female respondents dismissed refugees showing no effort to find a job more strongly, than did male respondents. As our sample is skewed in the opposite direction, our estimate is conservative. Incidentally, this may help explain why Hypotheses 2 and 3 found no support. A more representative sample would approximate true attitudes in the overall population more closely.

Second, while we are able to confirm that refugees' gender indeed plays a role for the native populations' perception of their deservingness, we were not able to empirically examine the mechanisms underlying this relationship further. In view of our encouraging findings, however, we strongly commend future research to incorporate deliberate measurements of gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism in order to further understand *why* female refugees are perceived differently than male refugees.

Third, we encourage more scrutiny on certain characteristics in vignette-studies, like gender, that are likely to entail stereotypes. Our results imply that gender has a kind of "double-impact," both through its direct effect on the perceived fairness of an allocated amount of money, and through indirect effects via its interactions with other vignette characteristics, such as employability. With respect to the larger literature on deservingness, such a potential double-effect of "*identity*-criterion-related" characteristics has been pointed out by Tavernier and Draulans (2020) and we provide some empirical evidence in support of their idea. Further investigations of this idea could, as Tavernier and Draulans (2020) argue, help understand the effects of policies on deservingness evaluations, especially because policies often reinforce already existing stereotypes.

And finally, we did not further examine the role of country of origin and its potential interaction with refugees' gender in people's deservingness perceptions. A poll, Focus (2022), comparing the differing perceptions of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees in Germany, claims that there is a

[5] See Model m1respage1 in Appendix B.1 and Table B.2.4 in Appendix B.2.
[6] All additional analyses are presented in Appendix B.1.

greater cultural closeness between Germans and "Fellow-Europeans from Ukraine," versus the more distinct "Arabs from Syria" (Focus, 2022). In our study, the nationality of refugees can be considered as a proxy for cultural character. Understood as such, however, we do not find evidence for this argument: quite the opposite, we even find a mildly significant effect indicating that refugees from Eastern-Ukraine – the part of Ukraine that was under attack at the time of the study – are viewed as less deserving than refugees from Syria (see Model 1 in Table 2.2)[7]. This contradicts the notion of a greater perceived cultural closeness to Ukraine, at least at the given time. Instead, and given that gender interacted almost not at all with the country of origin[8], our study maintains that refugees from Syria, had they also been predominantly female, would have been received more positively in Germany. However, cultural closeness may still drive opinions and our empirical results on the question may be a product of their time: the perceived intensity of the conflict might also influence native-born Germans' deservingness perceptions, an interlink with the deservingness criterion *need*. In 2016, attention was mainly focused on the war in Syria and less on the emerging conflict in Ukraine. The German public thus had more vivid images of Syrian refugees and their plight and may have considered their need greater. We thus cannot dispose of the cultural argument altogether – but we also cannot address this more closely with the data at hand.

Despite these caveats, the contributions of this study are twofold: first, while previous studies on deservingness perceptions toward refugees have often viewed gender only as a control variable, we push the field further by providing a thorough theoretical discussion of the interlinkage between gender and deservingness perceptions. We present and support an argument that aims to elucidate varying attitudes toward different refugee groups and which draws on gender stereotypes and benevolent sexism as explanatory approaches. Second, we empirically evaluated our argument by examining the role of gender in interrelation with the deservingness criteria of employability. We show that refugee men and women are not viewed differently in their ability, but in their willingness to work. With these, both broader, as well as more nuanced contributions, we further show and substantiate: gender matters, also for refugees.

[7] However, as model m1respleftright8 in Appendix B.1 shows, this is mostly driven by politically left-leaning respondents of which we have a disproportionate amount in our sample. See also Table B.2.5 and Figure B.2.4 in Appendix B.2.

[8] Compare model m1sex3 in Appendix B.1: Interacting the vignette's gender with its country of origin yielded merely mildly significant ($p < 0.1$), negative effects only when comparing male Syrians and Eritreans to male Eastern-Ukrainians, meaning that Eastern-Ukrainian males were considered least deserving. Support for females did not differ comparing refugees from the different countries.

4. Study 3 – The Impact of Stereotypes on Framing Effect Duration

Abstract: Stereotypes are prevalent in society and profoundly impact attitudes. So far, however stereotypes in communication are missing in current framing effect studies. Filling this gap appears particularly worthwhile, seeing that due to their way of functioning, stereotypes are likely to exhibit similar effects on opinions when combined with frames, as do cues. This study meticulously considers such an interaction, as well as the direct effects of stereotypical frames, both immediately after treatment and over time. It does so by applying a large-scale, preregistered survey experiment in Germany. This returns mixed results: while stereotypical frames initially appear to have no direct impact on respondents, this changes when the degree to which respondents hold stereotypes on the stereotyped group are introduced as moderator. Implications thereof and paths for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Framing, Stereotypes, Stereotypical Frames, Framing Effects, Refugees, Germany

4.1 Introduction

An extensive body of literature has shown that *frames in communication* – meaning statements that emphasize certain aspects of an issue while simultaneously depreciating other aspects (Druckman, 2011) – considerably impact perceptions (see e. g. Amsalem and Zoizner, 2022; Chong, 1993; Tversky and Kahneman, 1981). More recently, scientific work has focused on the boundaries of framing effects, specifically on their longevity (e.g., Ho, 2021; Lecheler and Vreese, 2016), and on their relation to other textual elements, like cues (e.g., Boydstun et al., 2019; Knapp et al., 2022). On the one hand, adding a temporal dimension has contributed to a fairer overall assessment on framing effects' relevance for the formation and manipulation of opinions. Including source cues, such as identifying a trustworthy entity as the source of a political frame, has on the other hand increased the complexity of the analysis and thereby enhanced its empirical realism. This realism is crucial, because political communication typically occurs in a crowded environment where numerous competing and complementary messages coexist. However, framing effects are often studied in overly simplified and artificial lab settings, which may not fully capture these dynamics.

In the study at hand, I augment these recent contributions by providing more real-world complexity through examining potentially highly relevant frames – those that bear stereotypes – and considering them also from a temporal perspective. Stereotypes in texts and their reception by audiences have not yet received sufficient attention in framing effects research. This is noteworthy because stereotypes play an outstanding role in how individuals see the world: Everyone holds stereotypes, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether activated or not activated in a given situation (Devine, 1989). Stereotypes impact attitudes and behavior toward the groups they target (Karlins et al., 1969), often entailing negative consequences, particularly for marginalized and minority groups. For example, stereotypes about migrants and refugees can nurture aggression and fear, which may escalate into hate speech and even physical violence (Kopytowska and Baider, 2017). Also, being subjected to stereotypical representations can have adverse consequences for members of the stereotyped group; stereotypical representations, for instance, can contribute to lower cognitive and educational achievements – a process widely researched and summarized under the term stereotype threat (see, e.g., Appel and Weber, 2021).

In the present study I argue that stereotypes in communication are comparable to source cues in anchoring additional thoughts and that they may therefore interact similarly with frames as cues do. Generally, cues are pieces of information that enable individuals to draw inferences

about an issue without receiving more detailed information (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). For example, a source cue could be the endorsement of a party's economic plan by a Nobel Prize-winning economist, which might lead to greater voter support for that plan (Druckman et al., 2010). Similarly, stereotypes also enable individuals to draw inferences about, e.g., members of a marginalized group, based on the very limited information given in the stereotype. Cues have been shown to impact the effectiveness of framing, both immediately after treatment (Bechtel et al., 2015; Nicholson, 2011, 2012) and over time (Druckman et al., 2010). Whether stereotypes impact framing effects similarly, is the question this study attempts to answer.

To do so, I conducted a two-stage survey experiment (N = 5,266). In it, I described a fictitious policy that I framed in either a positive, negative or neutral way. Simultaneously, I induced a gendered stereotype about the beneficiary group of the proposed policy through a 'stereotypical frame' (see below). Respondents were then asked to provide immediate evaluation of the policy, which helps me assess the impact of the different ways in which it was described. Next, I resurveyed respondents at a later time point for their attitudes toward the given policy. This, in turn, enables me to judge temporal framing and stereotyping effects. Finally, respondents indicated prior-held affirmance with the induced stereotype. This allows me to paint a comprehensive picture of the effects of stereotypes in political communication.

4.2 Theory

Framing effects occur when an issue is presented by *frames in communication* in different ways, and this presentation changes individuals' *frames in thought* – their attitudes or emotions – resulting in behavioral change related to the issue (Amsalem and Zoizner, 2022; Cacciatore et al., 2016; Druckman, 2001b). *Frames in thought* consist of all the dimensions of an issue on which individuals base their evaluation of it (Druckman, 2011, pp. 281–282). To be considered, these dimensions have to be:

- i) *available* – the aspect must be stored in the memory of an individual, so that it is available for cognitive retrieval when forming an attitude on the issue;
- ii) *accessible* – the aspect must have crossed a cognitive "activation threshold" (p. 284), so that it is taken into account when forming an attitude on said issue;
- iii) *applicable* – the aspect must be perceived as worth considering for the evaluation of said issue (Druckman, 2011).

Only when at least one of these three criteria for an aspect of a *frame in thought* is significantly altered by a *frame in communication*, do framing effects occur (Druckman, 2011).

4.2.1 Duration of Framing Effects and Framing Effects and Cues

Frames can have noteworthy temporal effects. For instance, on an issue of low public salience, one study identified lasting effects of news frames of up to two weeks after initial exposure (Lecheler and Vreese, 2011). Mechanism-wise, enduring framing effects have been suggested to manifest most strongly when the *applicability* of certain beliefs is increased (Baden and Lecheler, 2012). This occurs when a previously less prominent link between a side aspect of an issue and the issue as a whole is highlighted by a frame. The newly strengthened link may then entail a more durable framing effect, if it enables the creation of novel considerations (Baden and Lecheler, 2012; Chong and Druckman, 2007c, 2010; Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2020): For example, a frame highlighting that many beneficiaries of a specific refugee policy are female might (re-) establish a cognitive link between the policy and female refugees. This cognitive link may then be reinforced, if it triggers new thoughts on the proposed policy that have to do with female refugees. One such consideration could, for instance, be that because (1) female refugees are stereotypically associated with greater vulnerability (Fliethmann et al., 2024;

Mesarič and Vacchelli, 2021), and (2) greater vulnerability is commonly associated with greater deservingness of support (e.g., Bansak et al., 2016), the proposed policy is connected with a (more) positive evaluation. When revisiting the policy at a later stage, recipients might either directly recall the frame that (re-) introduced the link between the policy and the deserving target group of female refugees; or they may vaguely associate the policy with something positive. In this way, the given frame would have both an immediate and a lasting effect.

Apart from the duration of framing effects of individual frames, in real-world settings, frames are also often impacted by competing or complementary information, both immediate and over time (e.g., Borah, 2019; Druckman et al., 2010; Knapp et al., 2022). Such information can take the form of other (thematic) frames or of cues (Druckman et al., 2010). Cues are pieces of information that lead to inferences via implication, instead of explicit disclosure (Druckman et al., 2010; Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). In a political context, endorsement cues – i.e., when a politician endorses a frame provided by a news agency – signal the partisan affiliation to a frame recipient of the frame.[1] This, in turn, may inform the evaluation of the frame: For instance, if a frame emphasizing the effectiveness of a refugee policy were endorsed by a politician whom a frame recipient considered to be particularly trustworthy, the frame recipient would likely deem the frame on the policy's effectiveness more credible as well. The cue would thus increase the frame's immediate effect on the policy's evaluation (compare Slothuus and Vreese, 2010). Also, such a cue might additionally increase a frame's temporal effectiveness: Again, the policy might be revisited at a later stage and a recipient might either directly recall that its effectiveness was positively endorsed by a trusted source, or it might at least be remembered that something about the policy's effectiveness was positive or at least credible. If the policy would then be positively evaluated by the recipient, this would – in parts – be because of the over-time framing effect.

There is some empirical research that scrutinizes cues in the context of political communication. Cues in the form of endorsements are thereby shown to cause – within certain boundaries – opinion change *immediately* after treatment: In one study, support for a 'good' policy was, for instance, only (negatively) affected if an extreme, heavily disliked group was cued as supporter of the policy. For sponsor groups that were not seen as similarly critical, no difference in support for the policy was found (Nicholson, 2011). Likewise, in the American political sphere, endorsements of a policy by an in-party politician did not sway supporters' opinions. In

[1] These kinds of cues can rightfully also be considered a type of frame because they emphasize a particular aspect, namely an information's political leaning.

contrast, endorsements by an out-party politician had a polarizing effect (Nicholson, 2012). In yet another study, involving a high-salience issue, cues (and frames) only increased the recipients' support for positions that closely aligned with their pre-existing sentiments, regardless of the content of the cues (Bechtel et al., 2015). Thus, cues have been shown to have immediate impact on opinion formation, however within the limits of, especially, prior-held beliefs and partisan pre-dispositions of recipients.

Where there is some work on immediate cue effects, temporal cue effects have received very little empirical scrutiny. In the one notable exception that systematically compares temporal cue and framing effects, Druckman et al. (2010) found no immediate cue effects among survey respondents. Interestingly, however, when respondents were re-surveyed two weeks after initial exposure to the framed and cue-charged information, a cue effect was observed. In this study, participants' information processing styles were made out as important moderators of cue effects, but the authors did not discuss whether and how frames and cues interacted with one another over time. Because in real-world environments political frames are oftentimes provided in combination with (source) cues, for instance endorsements by politicians (see, for instance, Druckman, Kifer, Parkin, 2009), such an investigation would, however, be very interesting.

Building on these results, the present study investigates a type of information-giving analogous to cues, but even less scrutinized: stereotypes and stereotypical frames. Given their prevalence, these are likely to have a considerable real-world impact. Additionally, considering literature and its identified gaps, I investigate stereotypical framing effects in conjunction with other frames, examining both immediate and over-time effects. Thereby, I also incorporate a relevant moderator, which facilitates a comprehensive empirical investigation. Before diving into this, however, it is necessary to situate stereotypes within the broader framing effects literature.

4.2.2 Stereotypes, Stereotypical Frames and their Framing Effects

Stereotypes in text provide information in a very similar way to cues. Stereotypes have been defined as "collection[s] of associations that link a target group to a set of descriptive characteristics" (Gaertner and McLaughlin, 1983, p. 23). They are not necessarily negative, but simplified representations that generalize a couple of characteristics to an entire group, disregarding the uniqueness of individuals within that group (Yang, 2015). Rather than evaluating own experiences, individuals "let culture do their thinking" (Schneider, 2004, p. 20 in Yang, 2015). Reflections on the subjects of stereotypes are thus curtailed and mental energy

economized. This is highly similar to cues, based upon which – as discussed – individuals also infer implications not explicitly mentioned.

Stereotypes in individuals can be triggered in multiple ways: At one end of the spectrum, implicitly activating gender stereotypes to the effect that females perform worse in sports practice, has shown to take as little as the presence of a male instructor (Cardozo et al., 2021). Here, the male instructor acted as a cue for the given stereotype that consequently induced a measurable sensation of stereotype threat. At the other end of the spectrum, stereotypes and stereotype threat in individuals have been elicited by drawing awareness to a stereotypical characteristic of a person or group through a text that explicitly emphasizes said characteristic (for an overview see Appel and Weber, 2021). In the study at hand, I rely on this form of stereotype activation, given its accounted for effectiveness (see ibid.) and its feasibility in terms of implementation (see below). This method however – placing clear emphasis on a certain aspect, here characteristic, of a given group – constitutes a kind of frame in its own right, as frames also accentuate a particular characteristic. When referring to stereotype activation in this form, I therefore apply the term *stereotypical frame*.[2]

Similar to cues, stereotypes affect behavior differently, given personal characteristics of those exposed to them. One such personal characteristic is the degree of pre-held stereotypical beliefs: for instance with respect to mathematics tasks, females showing greater implicit gender-math stereotypes – that is a greater male-math association than a female-math association – were effected more by stereotype manipulation, than those with weaker implicit stereotypes (Franceschini et al., 2014; Kiefer and Sekaquaptewa, 2007). Also, prior knowledge of stereotypes matters for stereotype susceptibility: In another study on mathematics tasks, respondents were primed with their identity as member of a stereotypical group – either being Asian-American (stereotyped with high math ability) or female (stereotyped with low math ability). Statistically significant effects of the primes were only observed among those participants who had knowledge of the math ability stereotypes related to these identities (Gibson et al., 2014). When investigating stereotypical frames, stereotype awareness may thus likely play a moderating role and should be taken into account.

[2] Yang (2015) provides a classification of *Stereotypical Frames*, sorting them into five categories based on message features, as well as reactions stimulated by them. However, she does not effectively define stereotypical frames. Therefore, I mirror Druckman 's (2011) definition of *Frames in Communication*, and define *Stereotypical Frames* as '*verbal or non-verbal statements that place clear emphasis on descriptive characteristics stereotypically associated with a delimitable group*'.

Among the many existing stereotypes, investigating gender stereotypes has particularly strong real-world relevance. Gender, or, to be precise, ascribed gender, is a category along which many individuals group their surroundings: both adults and children automatically cluster individuals according to their gender (Bennett et al., 2000; Ito and Urland, 2003). Also, because gender is still most often perceived as binary, direct comparisons between men and women are easily facilitated. Repeated focus on binary gender (re-) emphasizes differences between them, thereby bolstering already existing stereotypes and making the emergence of new ones more likely (Ellemers, 2018). Resulting negative consequence of these stereotypes – for instance hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick and Fiske, 1997) – make their investigation particularly pertinent. Also, they appear particularly well-suited for investigating stereotypical frames: Because of their prevalence, recipients of such frames are likely to react strongly to them. Both immediate and long-term framing effects thus become more likely and should be more easily measurable. Analyses of less pervasive stereotypes could then follow in subsequent steps.

A context in which gender stereotypes play a significant role in citizens' perceptions is that of refugees. Broadly speaking, stereotypical images hold that female refugees are particularly vulnerable and needy (Ayoub, 2017; Baklacioğlu, 2017; Freedman, 2017), whereas male refugees are seen as violent and dangerous (McMahon and Kahn, 2018; Rettberg and Gajjala, 2016). Female refugees are thus considered to be more deserving of support than male refugees, and there are higher expectations toward male refugees to contribute to their host society (Fliethmann et al., 2024). An example for one of many consequences of these stereotypes is that human rights violations in a refugee's country of origin are considered notably more relevant for female than for male refugees, resulting in higher protection rates for women, even when both genders suffer similarly from these violations (Plümper and Neumayer, 2021). Studying gender stereotypes in the context of refugees is thus highly relevant. Gaining a better understanding of how stereotypes impact attitudes can help alleviate inequalities that result from such biased opinions.

Furthermore, gender stereotypes implicitly affect attitudes in the context of refugees – but are simultaneously not a focal point of overall perceptions of refugees: In a pre-study to this work, 104 survey respondents were asked to name all "refugee and migration-related groups" they could think of. Of all 446 different groups named, only three answers referenced gender in any form. Thus, gender stereotypes are likely to be triggered in the context of refugees and migration – but, at the same time, it is reasonable to expect that gender stereotypes on refugees will not be overly prevalent among respondents, which would severely hamper the ability of

stereotypical frames to achieve measurable changes in opinion. Between these two points, studying gender stereotypes in the context of refugees seems like a good middle ground.

4.2.3 Hypotheses

As argued, stereotypical frames likely evoke meaningful associations similar to cues. These associations can reasonably be expected to alter the opinions of those exposed to them. Also, they can be anticipated to interact with other political frames in a way similar to that of cues. Finally, given their similarity with cues, they may likely cause not only short-term, but also long-term effects.

Based on these considerations, and based on previous literature, I derive my hypotheses. These address my two different frames – a valence frame and the stereotypical frame – individually and in conjunction, immediately after treatment and over time. All hypotheses were preregistered and the study was approved by the Ethics Board of the author's university.[3]

In the study, I apply different frames to a fictitious policy aimed at supporting refugees. Framing a policy is useful, because it takes out some of the bias and strong emotions that would be linked to direct evaluations of, e.g., refugees or members of other minority groups. The policy is thus framed as either positive (i.e. effective), negative (i.e. ineffective), or neutral (i.e. both its effectiveness and its ineffectiveness are addressed; see Table 3.1 below). Hypothesis 1 addresses the effect of the valence frame in comparison to the negative or neutral frame, in the manner common to valence framing studies (compare Olsen, 2015):

> *H1: Positive framing of the proposed policy results in higher levels of support for that policy than negative or no framing.*

Next to the valence frame, I introduce a stereotypical frame. In this frame, the stereotypical vulnerability of a part of the policy's beneficiary group is emphasized. I expect that this focus will arouse pity for the beneficiary group (see also David, 2022), resulting in higher support for the proposed policy:

> *H2: Activating a stereotype in support of the proposed policy results in higher levels of support for that policy than no stereotype activation.*

[3] The hypotheses and research design were preregistered at the Open Science Foundation Registry: Fliethmann, A. (2023, May 26). Framing and Stereotypes. Retrieved from osf.io/bj745. Also, the study procedure was approved by the University of Konstanz Institutional review board (Ethics Commission) in IRB statement 11/2023.

Further, I expect that a valence frame and a stereotypical frame that are both effective in impacting opinions, may reinforce each other: While the valence frame increases the accessibility of a particular consideration, the information provided by a corresponding stereotypical frame additionally furthers its applicability – apart from also intensifying said accessibility. Combining a matching valence and a stereotypical frame with one another may likely lead to a mutual reinforcement of the effects of both (for corroborating empirical work see Detenber et al., 2018; Ho, 2021). Hypothesis 3 thus reads:

> *H3: Positive framing has a greater effect on respondents exposed to stereotype activation in support of the proposed policy than on respondents not exposed to stereotype activation.*

With regard to the effects of frames, stereotypical frames, and their suggested interaction over time, several further expectations are derived. For one, frames with different valences regarding the proposed policy may elicit overt-time framing effects, especially if they influence accessibility and applicability. To account for this, Hypothesis 4 reads:

> *H4: Positive framing of the proposed policy results in higher levels of support for that policy over time than negative or no framing.*

For another, effects of the stereotypical frame my also endure over time: If a stereotype is indeed triggered, increased applicability considerations of the stereotypical frame will enable a sustained effect. This mechanism may mirror that of temporal cue effects, for which Druckman et al. (2010) provide evidence.

> *H5: Activating a stereotype that aligns with the outcome of the proposed policy results in higher levels of support for that policy over time than no stereotype activation.*

With regard to the interplay of the differently valenced frames with the stereotypical frame over time, again I expect an effect: A frame portraying a policy as effective, combined with a stereotypical frame highlighting the vulnerability of one of the policy's beneficiary groups, are likely to reinforce each other in their impact on opinions. This occurs because the stereotypical frame increases the applicability considerations, potentially triggering additional associations. Respondents might not only feel compassion for the stereotypically vulnerable group but also view its members as particularly deserving of support because of their neediness. Through the additional consideration of deservingness, the information that the proposed policy is effective becomes particularly important and will therefore be more easily remembered when the policy is brought up again at a later point – the positive frame of the policy's effectiveness is likely to

be present for a longer period than when no stereotypical frame is provided. Hence, I hypothesize:

> *H6: Positive framing has a greater effect over time on respondents exposed to stereotype activation in support of the proposed policy than on respondents not exposed to stereotype activation.*

Finally, as mentioned above, cue and stereotype effects have been shown to be moderated by individual-level factors, for instance by partisan pre-dispositions (Nicholson, 2011, 2012) and stereotype awareness (Gibson et al., 2014). Since framing is very much about emphases and raising awareness for particular aspects of an issue, concrete stereotype awareness could not be employed as moderator in this study – any indication of stereotype awareness might have been completely driven by the stereotypical frame and would have thus failed to meaningfully contribute. Instead, the degree to which the triggered stereotype was endorsed was taken as potential moderator, both immediately after treatment and over time (see below). As this is a new moderator in framing research, I do not explicate hypotheses on it, but rather formulate an exploratory research question.[4] If the moderator were to behave similar to stereotype awareness (see above), then it would be reasonable to expect, that the stereotypical frame would exhibit stronger effects for individuals who had held stronger prior stereotypes before treatment, than those with weaker prior stereotypes.

> *Exploratory RQ: Are the immediate and over time effects of a stereotypical frame that aligns with the outcome of the proposed policy moderated by prior-held stereotypes?*

[4] The exploratory research question departs from my preregistered hypotheses. However, it allows for an even more in-depth analysis of the mechanism behind stereotypical framing effects, which is why I include it.

4.3 Methods

I address the hypotheses and my exploratory research question with an online survey experiment that was conducted in Germany from May to July 2023, on a sample representative of the German population with respect to age, gender, education and residence (see section 4.3.1). Germany was chosen as a study context in which the refugee issue is salient and gender stereotypes are prevalent (compare Fliethmann et al., 2024).[5] Respondents were randomly assigned to one of 2 (stereotype activation – no stereotype activation) x 3 (positive, negative, or neutral valence frame) treatment conditions.

The over-time interaction of the valence and the stereotypical frame was addressed by means of a later, second measurement: Upon completion of the first questionnaire at t_1, respondents were randomly assigned to one of three possible delayed measurement points, either a day (t_2), a week (t_3) or two weeks (t_4) after initial treatment.[6] The intervals for the delayed measurements were chosen according to the most common intervals in framing effect duration studies (Lecheler and Vreese, 2016).[7]

At their second measurement point, respondents were not treated again, but only re-interviewed about the treatment they had initially received. All respondents were only surveyed twice and samples at t_2-t_4 did not significantly differ with respect to the respondent characteristics subject to the representativeness-quota (see section 4.3.1) or the distribution of treatment conditions. Of the 5,674 respondents that successfully completed the survey at t_1, 5,394 also fully took part at (one of) the follow-up measurement time points (94.55%).[8]

To ensure satisfactory data quality, completed surveys were filtered by several quality criteria: First, respondents were asked at the end of the second survey to honestly state whether they themselves had participated at t_1. They were informed that they would face no consequences if

[5] This applies to multiple other countries as well, however results would not be expected to greatly change in different contexts. As such, Germany is a reasonable but not particular distinguished example case.
[6] Randomization checks tested whether randomization for the treatment conditions and the assignment to the delayed measurement points in time worked. Respondents did not vary significantly with regard to age and gender. Respondents at delayed measurement points in time t_2 and t_4, however, slightly differed in terms of education, with respondents at t_4 being slightly better educated. Otherwise, randomization for treatment conditions regarding differently educated respondents worked, see Appendix C.1.
[7] Although there are still only scarce attempts at explaining why these precise intervals might bear significance (see for instance Baden and Lecheler, 2012), choosing the intervals common in the literature connects the findings of this study better to previous results in the field.
[8] This outstanding rate of return was ensured by multiple indications to respondents that the survey consisted of two parts, as well as a split compensation scheme: only respondents completing both parts received full compensation. Also, the share of compensation at t_1 was considerably smaller than at $t_{2\text{-}4}$, as an additional incentive to return for part two.

they had not, but respondents answering that somebody else had participated at t_1 were excluded from the analysis (n = 29). Second, respondents who had taken less than 40% of the median survey duration combined for both time points (less than 6 minutes, the median duration being 15:10 minutes), were also excluded from the analysis (n = 65). Finally, the same applied to respondents who answered more than 20% of closed questions with opt-out options such as "no answer" or "don't know" (n = 34). Thus, a total of 5,266 responses was used in the analysis.

4.3.1 Respondents

Respondents were recruited via Kantar Public's online-access survey respondent pool that compensates study participation in the form of loyalty points within a payback reward scheme. Respondents were invited to attend a survey "in support of a research endeavor by the University of Konstanz". After accepting to participate, they were informed that they would be surveyed on a "program for the better integration of refugees" (both invitation texts and original survey in German, own translation). They were also informed that their answers would be analyzed anonymously, that their personal information would not be disclosed to third parties, and that they had the opportunity to withdraw from the survey at any given point in time.

Quotas were applied to contact a sample representative of the German population with regard to gender, age, education and region. The eventual sample consisted of 2,587 males (49.13%), 2,672 females (50.74%) and 7 individuals who selected the label "diverse" (0.13%). Respondents were asked for their highest secondary level of education that was either low (1,795; 34.09%), intermediate (1,628; 30.92%) or high (1,843; 35.00%). Also, they were between 18-94 years old (M = 50.96; SD = 16.95). On these three characteristics, cross-quotas were applied, and, additionally, respondents were recruited representative of the German federal states (*Bundesländer*).[9]

4.3.2 Treatment Conditions

The survey presented respondents with information on a (fictitious) policy dedicated to supporting refugees in processing the traumas they had experienced during their flight. At the time of the study, there was no similar policy implemented in Germany, which means that respondents could not compare it with any currently implemented program. Nevertheless, such programs had been talked about by NGOs in Germany for quite a while already (see, for

[9] All survey data including respondent distribution across federal states can be accessed in the online appendix (see comment in Appendix C.1) or can be requested from the author.

instance, Fehsenfeld, 2018; Schrenk, 2023). Some respondents may therefore have had a more detailed picture of such programs in mind. The absence of mentions of such program proposals by respondents in the free comment fields of the study is, however, one indication that only very few respondents might have been aware of these proposals. Also, potential biases through knowledge of such a program should be distributed evenly across treatment conditions, so that the overall results should not be affected by these too much.

All respondents received the following, same information on the policy:

- The majority of refugees in Germany have been exposed to extreme violence in their home countries or during their flight;
- The brutality they were exposed to often leads to a psychological trauma, presenting refugees with challenges for successfully integrating into the German society;
- The federal government is working on a new program to improve the handling of trauma, that will assist all affected refugees;
- On average, the program would cost the state 4,500 € per respondent;
- This sum is the equivalent of what is usually paid by German taxpayers per refugee per year.

The respondents in the stereotypical frame condition additionally received the following information:

- "**Women and girls** were probably ***particularly frequent*** victims of this violence." (*Text originally in German, own translation. Formatting equivalent in provided treatment text.*)

The frame aimed to activate gendered stereotypes of female refugees. It drew particular attention to their vulnerability, a characteristic that a pre-study revealed to be stereotypically associated with this group.[10] Although the program was explicitly described as supporting all

[10] In a pre-study to this work following the procedures of Kotzur et al. (2019) and Asbrock (2010), 407 respondents were asked to provide stereotypes and attributes they believed to be widespread among the German population, associated with certain social groups. A qualitative analysis of the provided answers showed that the largest group of attributes (n = 74) of all the answers given (n = 316) with respect to the social group of *female refugees* contained terms describing vulnerability. For *male refugees*, equivalent terms were only mentioned 18 times (in the 377 answers provided).

affected refugees, a considerable number of respondents in the stereotypical frame condition indicated in a manipulation check (see below) that the policy aimed *exclusively* at supporting female refugees (309 respondents, or 12.12%). This shows that stereotype activation succeeded in shifting the mindset of survey respondents to pay particular attention to female refugees.

Next, the effectiveness of the policy was framed for each of the respondents in one of three different ways. Importantly, the framing did not alter actual information that was presented. In other words, all frames provided logically equivalent information in three differently valenced forms (see also Sher and McKenzie, 2006). The exact wording is presented in Table 3.1.

All in all, the study encompassed 18 experimental conditions: 2x3 different treatment conditions, multiplied with the three possible points in time at which respondents were re-interviewed. The numbers of respondents per condition are provided in Table 3.2.

4.3.3 Study Procedure

The study proceeded as follows: After an introduction and some basic demographic questions (gender, age, education, region), respondents were presented with the information and the different frames on the fictitious policy. Their evaluation of this policy was then measured on an eleven-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater support for the policy ($t_1(5,266)$: $M = 6.47$; $SD = 3.29$). Following this, several checks were performed: The first one showed that 83.69% (n = 4,407) of respondents could correctly indicate what the proposed policy was about and that this was not influenced by the stereotypical frame ($t(5,264) = -0.74$; $p = 0.46$). The next check on the stereotypical frame showed that respondents in the stereotypical frame condition were significantly more inclined to think about different subgroups as beneficiaries of the proposed policy (e.g., 'female refugees') than the actual target group ('all refugees'; $M_{stereotypical\ frame} = 0.77$, $M_{no\text{-}stereotypical\ frame} = 0.88$, on a dummy variable taking a value of 1 when the correct target group was indicated; $t(5,266) = 10.41$, $p < 0.001$). A third and final check evidenced a successful manipulation by the framing conditions, with respondents in the positive framing condition evaluating the policy significantly more effective ($M = 7.40$; $SD = 2.90$) than respondents in the neutral ($M = 6.84$; $SD = 2.83$) ($t(3,450) = 5.69$; $p < 0.001$) or in the negative framing condition ($M = 6.06$; $SD = 2.84$) ($t(3,479) = 13.72$; $p <$

Table 3.1 – Valence Frames. Text originally in German, own translation. Formatting equivalent in provided treatment text.		
Positive Valence	Negative Valence	Neutral Valence
For **seven out of ten** participants, the program would be **successful**. This means that **70%** of the participants could **improve their integration**.	However, the program would be **ineffective** for **three out of ten** participants. This means that **30%** may still **struggle with their integration**.	However, the program would be **ineffective** for **three out of ten** participants, and for **seven out of ten** participants, the program would be **successful**. This means that **30%** may still **struggle with their integration**, while **70%** could **improve their integration**.

Table 3.2 – Experimental Conditions and Ns.				
		Positive Frame	Neutral Frame	Negative Frame
Re-interviewed at t_2	Stereotypical frame	n = 292	n = 286	n = 289
	No-stereotypical frame	n = 324	n = 305	n = 283
Re-interviewed at t_3	Stereotypical frame	n = 278	n = 287	n = 278
	No-stereotypical frame	n = 294	n = 284	n = 320
Re-interviewed at t_4	Stereotypical frame	n = 283	n = 303	n = 315
	No-stereotypical frame	n = 304	n = 264	n = 277

0.001).[11] This is surprising given the logical equivalence of the effectiveness of the policy described to all respondents, but in line with previous findings on (equi-) valence frames.

Hereafter, some further respondent-level characteristics and indicators were collected; however, they play no role in this analysis.[12] Finally, respondents were randomly assigned to a

[11] This manipulation check asked respondents on a 11-point Likert scale to indicate whether the proposed policy was described as not effective at all (1), or extremely effective (11). Comparing the neutral to the negative condition, I also found a significant difference, with respondents in the neutral condition evaluating the policy less negative than respondents in the negative condition ($t(3,441) = 8.07$; $p < .001$).

[12] These indicators were *processing mode of information, political self-placement, contact with refugees, contact with migrants, nationality, migration background, political knowledge, size of city of residence, job, income, number of household members.*

group for the second survey round – either one day, one week or two weeks after completion of the initial survey.

The second part of the survey collected demographic information anew, and asked respondents again about their opinion toward the proposed policy (t_2(1,779): M = 6.31; SD = 3.23; t_3(1,741): M = 6.17; SD = 3.12; t_4:(1,746): M = 6.23; SD = 3.08). Importantly, while in part two the components of the proposed policy were briefly revisited, the frames on the policy's effectiveness and on the particular vulnerability of female refugees – the treatments – were not repeated. Then, respondents were asked whether they had encountered news reports on or had discussed refugees or violence toward refugees in the period between the two parts of the survey – which only a negligible part of the respondents had done.[13]

Next, respondents' susceptibility to gender stereotyping with respect to refugees was approximated. For this, the established stereotype content model (SCM) scale (Cuddy et al., 2009; Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske, 2018) was used: Following the characteristic mode of the scale, respondents were surveyed on how much they believe 'most Germans' to ascribe to male or female refugees six particular attributes. Respondents indicated this on a five-point scale each (1 = "not < *attribute* > at all", 5 = "very < *attribute* >"). Three of these attributes each add up to form a scale on either the ascribed warmth, or the ascribed competence of the respective refugee group. They represent a well-established, generalized scheme for measuring stereotypes (compare Asbrock, 2010; Kotzur et al., 2019 for explanations of the procedure).[14] Because an earlier exposure to these attributes might have primed respondents toward the stereotype of the treatment condition, I choose to survey respondents on these attributes only at this later point in the survey. Because of the time interval between the SCM questions and exposure to the stereotypical frame (remember that the stereotypical frame was only presented at t_1), responses to these questions were most likely unaffected by the stereotypical frame.

Following this, two additional checks were carried out to examine possible effects of the stereotype framing condition: On the one hand, respondents in this condition expressed to a

[13] Following Lecheler and Vreese (2011), respondents were asked whether they had encountered media reports on refugees in general, or on violence toward refugees in particular in this period (1 = "encountered nothing at all" to 4 = "encountered a great deal"). Overall, respondents encountered only little news on refugees in general (M = 2.19; SD = 0.84), and even fewer on violence toward refugees in particular (M = 1.83; SD = 0.77). Also, respondents were asked whether they had discussed refugees in general, or violence toward refugees in particular with somebody (friends, acquaintances, etc.) during this period (1 = ''I did not discuss <*the issue*>'' to 4 = ''I discussed <*the issue*> numerous times''). Again, respondents only discussed refugees in general (M = 1.52; SD = 0.73), and violence toward refugees in particular (M = 1.29; SD = 0.59) to a minor extent.

[14] Following Kotzur et al. (2019), the six used attributes were the German translations of *good-natured*, *warm*, and *likeable* for the 'warmth' scale, and *competent*, *independent*, and *competitive* for the 'competence' scale.

significantly higher degree that female refugees were affected more often by violence during their flight than male refugees ($t(5{,}035) = -3.32$; $p < 0.001$).[15] On the other hand, there was no significant difference in what respondents in the two stereotypical frame conditions believed about the composition of refugees in Germany ($t(5{,}253) = -1.51$; $p = 0.13$); respondents deemed 61.27% of the refugees to be male, this number being around 10 percentages points below the officially provided numbers (BAMF, 2023b).[16]

Further, following Boydstun et al., 2019, a suspicion check was implemented in which respondents were asked in an open question whether they believed that they had been influenced by something they had read at t_1 in how they had evaluated the proposed policy. This question aimed to elicit whether respondents had prior knowledge of framing effects or suspicions based on the wording of the treatments. A qualitative assessment of answers to this question showed that no further respondents had to be excluded because of suspicions or prior knowledge. Finally, the already mentioned question on whether respondents had personally participated in both parts of the survey was asked and those respondents were dismissed.

[15] On a 9-point scale, respondents in the stereotype condition ($M = 6.47$; $SD = 2.29$) supposed that female refugees were effected significantly more often by violence than male refugees (no-stereotype condition: $M = 6.26$; $SD = 2.30$) – higher scores indicating that respondents expected females to be more effected than males.

[16] Asking respondents their presumed percentages of male refugees in Germany (each respondent was asked to indicate randomly the percentage for *either* male or *female* refugees in Germany and answers to the question for the percentage of female refugee were later transcribed), no statistically significant difference between respondents in the stereotype condition ($M = 61.66$; $SD = 18.16$) to those in the no-stereotype condition ($M = 60.89$; $SD = 18.75$) was found.

4.4 Results

The following section first presents the statistical analyses on the immediate and temporal valence framing effects (Hypotheses 1 and 4).[17] Next, immediate and temporal stereotype framing effects are scrutinized (Hypotheses 2 and 5), before, then, the interaction of valence and stereotype framing effects are displayed (Hypotheses 3 and 6). Finally, the role of prior-held stereotypes for the overall results is discussed (exploratory RQ).

4.4.1 Valence Framing Effects

Table 3.3 presents the mean differences between the different levels of the valence frame, immediately after treatment and over time. Statistical significance of the differences is identified by use of Wilcoxon Rank-Sum and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests (Wilcoxon, 1945), given that the normality assumption for the outcome variable was not met.[18]

Hypothesis 1 found support: respondents in the positive frame condition supported the proposed policy significantly more than those in the neutral or in the negative frame conditions.[19] However, considering conventional designations, effect sizes are rather small (Pearson's correlation coefficient r = -0.07 and r = -0.18 for the comparisons of the positive frame condition with the neutral and the negative frame conditions).[20] Further, respondents in the neutral frame condition also supported the proposed policy significantly more than those in the negative frame condition.

With respect to temporal valence framing effects (H 4), only mixed support was found. A significant difference between the means of the positive and the neutral valence frame conditions could only be detected for respondents one day, but not one week, or two weeks after initial treatment. Rather, the effect of the positive frame significantly decreased, until no statistically significant differences to the means of the neutral frame condition at t_3 and t_4 could be identified. Comparing positive to negative framing conditions, a significant difference was additionally recorded after one week.

[17] All analyses were performed using R version 4.2.2. and the base R stats package (R Core Team, 2018).
[18] Compare Main Analysis R Script (see comment in Appendix C.1), including alternative measurements reinforcing my results.
[19] The individual models testing all mean differences are presented in the Main Analysis R Script (see comment in Appendix C.1).
[20] Effect sizes were estimated following Field et al. (2012) and are presented in Main Analysis R Script (see comment in Appendix C.1).

Table 3.3 – Mean Evaluations of the Proposed Policy (11-point scale question) over Time per Valence Frame Conditions.

	Positive Frame (n = 1,775)	Neutral Frame (n = 1,729)	Negative Frame (n = 1,762)
Immediate evaluation (t_1)	7.01^{bcxyz} (3.20)	6.58^{acxyz} (3.22)	5.82^{ab} (3.33)
Evaluation after 1 day (t_2)	6.74^{bcwyz} (3.18)	6.28^{acw} (3.22)	5.86^{ab} (3.23)
Evaluation after 1 week (t_3)	6.34^{cwx} (3.14)	6.26^{cw} (3.09)	5.91^{ab} (3.08)
Evaluation after 2 weeks (t_4)	6.32^{wx} (3.04)	6.40^{cw} (3.08)	5.96^{b} (3.12)

Note: Different abc superscripts indicate a significant difference (at least $p < 0.05$) between framing conditions in the same time group (compared to: a = positive frame, b = neutral frame, c = negative frame). Different wxyz superscripts indicate a significant difference (at least $p < 0.05$) within a framing condition between the first point in time t_1 and the other points in time (w = t_1, x = t_2, y = t_3, z = t_4). Higher mean values indicate increased support for the proposed policy in support of refugees.

For negative versus neutral framing conditions, significant effects were found at all points after treatment. Interestingly, the negative framing effect remained constant even over time, with no significant differences showing between all four means in this framing condition. Also surprisingly, mean support for the proposed policy by respondents in the neutral framing condition decreased significantly comparing $t_{2\text{-}4}$ with t_1, with the latter three means remaining approximately on the same level.

4.4.2 Stereotype Framing Effects

The results regarding the stereotypical framing condition are presented equivalently to Table 3.3 in Table 3.4. Significant differences were again identified by use of Wilcoxon Rank-Sum and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests. No significant stereotype framing effect could be identified, comparing means of the stereotypical framing with the means in the respective no-stereotypical framing conditions, both at t_1, and at $t_{2\text{-}4}$. In line with findings above, support for the policy significantly decreased over time, both in the stereotypical frame and in the no-stereotypical

Table 3.4 – Mean Evaluations of the Proposed Policy (11-point scale question) over Time per Stereotypical Frame Conditions.

	Stereotypical Frame (n = 2,611)	No-Stereotypical Frame (n = 2,655)
Immediate evaluation (t_1)	6.49^{xyz} (3.20)	6.46^{xyz} (3.29)
Evaluation after 1 day (t_2)	6.38^{wz} (3.23)	6.23^{w} (3.23)
Evaluation after 1 week (t_3)	6.25^{w} (3.09)	6.09^{w} (3.13)
Evaluation after 2 weeks (t_4)	6.08^{wx} (3.12)	6.38^{w} (3.03)

Note: Different ab superscripts indicate a significant difference (at least $p < 0,05$) between stereotype framing conditions in the same time group (compared to: a = stereotypical frame, b = no-stereotypical frame). Different wxyz superscripts indicate a significant difference (at least $p < 0,05$) within a stereotype framing condition between the first point in time t_1 and the other points in time ($w = t_1$, $x = t_2$, $y = t_3$, $z = t_4$). Higher mean values indicate increased support for the proposed policy in support of refugees.

frame condition. However, contrary to expectations, the stereotypical frame did not have an impact at any given time. Both Hypotheses 2 and 5 thus have to be rejected.

4.4.3 Interactions of Valence and Stereotypical Frames

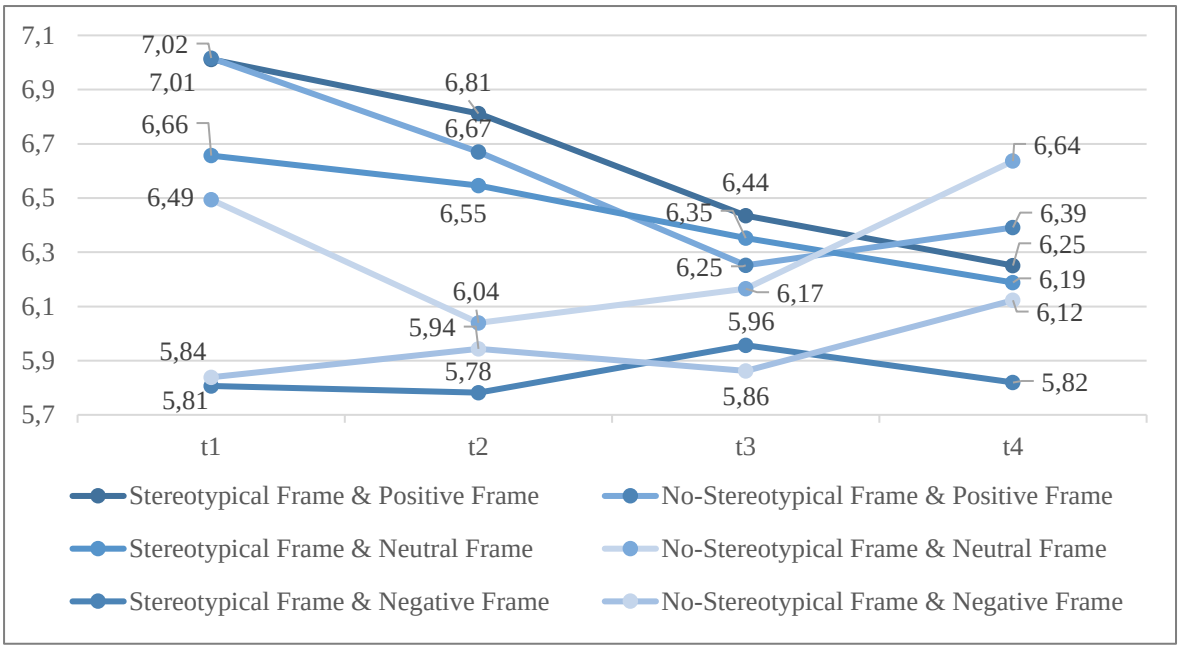
Going further, Table 3.5 looks at and Figure 3.1 illustrates how the combination of valence and stereotypical frames affected support for the proposed policy, again by using Wilcoxon Rank-Sum and Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests. Immediately after treatment (t_1), as well as at all delayed points in time (t_{2-4}), comparing the positive valence frame combined with the stereotypical frame, to the same valence frame combined with no-stereotypical frame, no statistically significant differences were identified. This leads to the rejection of Hypotheses 3 and 5. The same holds for the negative valence frame and its interaction with the stereotypical frame conditions. Despite a somewhat surprising spike for respondents in the neutral frame – no-stereotypical frame condition at t_4, also the neutral valence frame showed no significant interaction with the stereotypical frame.

Table 3.5 – Mean Evaluation of the Proposed Policy (11-point scale question) over Time per Treatment Conditions.

	Positive Frame & Stereot. Frame (n = 853)	Neutral Frame & Stereot. Frame (n = 876)	Negative Frame & Stereot. Frame (n = 882)	Positive Frame & No-Stereo. Frame (n = 922)	Neutral Frame & No-Stereo. Frame (n = 853)	Negative Frame & No-Stereo. Frame (n = 880)
Immediate eval. (t_1)	$7.01^{bcefxyz}$	6.66^{acdfz}	5.81^{abde}	$7.02^{bcefxyz}$	6.49^{acdfx}	5.84^{abde}
1 day (t_2)	6.81^{cefwz}	6.55^{cf}	5.78^{abd}	6.67^{cefw}	6.04^{acwz}	5.94^{abd}
1 week (t_3)	6.44^{cfw}	6.35^{f}	5.96^{a}	6.25^{w}	6.17	5.86^{ab}
2 weeks (t_4)	6.25^{wx}	6.19^{w}	5.82^{de}	6.39^{cw}	6.64^{cx}	6.12

Note: Different abcdef superscripts indicate a significant difference (at least $p < 0.05$) between treatment conditions with or without stereotype (compared to: a = stereo. & pos. frame, b = stereo. & neg. frame, c = stereo. & neut. frame, d = no-stereo. & pos. frame, e = no-stereo. & neg. frame, f = no-stereo. & neut. frame). Different wxyz superscripts indicate a significant difference (at least $p < 0.05$) within a stereotype framing condition between the first point in time t_1 and the other points in time (w = t_1, x = t_2, y = t_3, z = t_4). Higher mean values indicate increased support for the proposed policy in support of refugees.

Figure 3.1 – Mean Evaluation of the Proposed Policy (11-point scale question) per Treatment Conditions.



4.4.4 Moderation of Framing Effects by Prior-Held Stereotypes

Finally, the role of prior-held stereotypes, measured by the SCM, as moderators of the different framing effects are assessed. The stereotypical frame used in this survey was designed to evoke a stereotype associated with feelings of pity toward female refugees. For this reason, only the indicator of the SCM-warmth dimension is investigated as moderator for the functioning of the stereotypical frame.[21] I applied linear regression models, regressing support for the proposed policy on both treatment conditions and the SCM-warmth indicator, and then adding first the interaction of the two treatment conditions and then the interaction of the SCM-warmth indicator with the stereotypical frame condition. Lastly, to address Hypotheses 3 and 6 (the interaction of stereotypical and valence frames) under the moderation of the SCM-warmth indicator, I included a three-way interaction term between the three predictors. The results are presented in Table 3.6.

A first result is that in models including the SCM-warmth indicator as predictor, but not as moderator, respondents who associated more warmth with female than with male refugees were significantly more supportive of the proposed policy (Models 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 14). The second result is a significant, positive two-way interaction effect between the stereotypical frame condition and the categorical SCM-Warmth variable, both immediately, one week and two weeks after treatment (Models 3, 11 and 15).

Figure 3.2 further illustrates all moderation two-way interaction effects for the SCM-warmth indicator and the stereotypical frame (from Models 3, 7, 11 and 15). For the moderation at t_1, Figure 3.2 shows that individuals with prior-held gender stereotypes favoring female refugees were swayed more in favor of the proposed policy through the emphasis on female refugees' vulnerability. Even more interestingly however, respondents who were already less inclined toward female refugees in the first place appeared to exhibit a somewhat negative reaction to the stereotypical frame, as evidenced by their decreased support for the proposed policy. When female refugees' vulnerability was specifically brought to their attention by the stereotypical frame, these respondents supported the proposed policy even less.

[21] To distinguish between respondents who generally expressed sympathy toward refugees (showing high warmth toward both male and female refugees) and those who specifically favored female refugees (exhibiting higher warmth toward females compared to males), the sum of warmth ratings toward female refugees was subtracted from the sum of warmth ratings toward male refugees. Respondents with a resulting score below zero were categorized as holding female-friendly stereotypes, while all others were not. A significant majority (74.90%) of all respondents, totaling 3,944 individuals, were found to hold female-friendly stereotypes.

Table 3.6 – Linear Regression Models of Support for Proposed Policy on Treatments and SCM-Warmth.

	Evaluation at t_1			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Positive Frame	0.46 (0.11)***	0.55 (0.15)***	0.54 (0.15)***	0.66 (0.32)**
Negative Frame	-0.76 (0.11)***	-0.65 (0.16)***	-0.65 (0.16)***	-0.27 (0.33)
Stereotypical Frame	0.05 (0.11)	0.18 (0.16)	-0.14 (0.22)	-0.02 (0.32)
Warmth_Pro-Fem.	0.62 (0.09)***	0.63 (0.10)***	0.41 (0.15)***	0.63 (0.27)**
Positive Frame* Stereotypical Frame		-0.18 (0.22)	-0.17 (0.22)	-0.52 (0.44)
Negative Frame* Stereotypical Frame		-0.21 (022)	-0.21 (0.22)	-0.24 (0.45)
Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.			0.43 (0.21)**	0.26 (0.37)
Positive Frame*No-Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				-0.15 (0.36)
Negative Frame*No-Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				-0.51 (0.37)
Positive Frame* Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				0.32 (0.36)
Negative Frame* Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				-0.49 (0.36)
Constant	6.08 (0.12)***	6.01 (0.14)***	6.18 (0.16)***	6.02 (0.24)***
R^2	0.02938	0.02958	0.03036	0.0317
N	5,266	5,266	5,266	5,266

*Standard Errors indicated in parentheses, Significance of coefficients: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01*

Continued: Table 3.6 – Linear Regression Models of Support for Proposed Policy on Treatments and SCM-Warmth.

	Evaluation at t_2			
	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Positive Frame	0.46 (0.18)**	0.65 (0.26)**	0.65 (0.26)**	0.65 (0.52)
Negative Frame	-0.40 (0.19)**	-0.05 (0.26)	-0.04 (0.26)	0.61 (0.52)
Stereotypical Frame	0.17 (0.15)	0.53 (0.26)**	0.72 (0.37)*	1.11 (0.54)**
Warmth_Pro-Fem.	0.73 (0.17)***	0.73 (0.17)***	0.86 (0.24)***	1.16 (0.44)***
Positive Frame* Stereotypical Frame		-0.39 (0.37)	-0.39 (0.37)	-0.85 (0.74)
Negative Frame* Stereotypical Frame		-0.70 (0.38)*	-0.71 (0.38)*	-1.38 (0.74)*
Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.			-0.26 (0.45)	-0.77 (0.62)
Positive Frame*No-Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				0.02 (0.60)
Negative Frame*No-Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				-0.9 (0.61)
Positive Frame* Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				0.62 (0.62)
Negative Frame* Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				0.03 (0.61)
Constant	5.66 (0.20)***	5.48 (0.23)***	5.37 (0.26)***	5.16 (0.38)***
R^2	0.02271	0.02464	0.02496	0.0274
N	1,779	1,779	1,779	1,779

*Standard Errors indicated in parentheses, Significance of coefficients: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01*

Continued: Table 3.6 – Linear Regression Models of Support for Proposed Policy on Treatments and SCM-Warmth.

	Evaluation at t_3			
	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Positive Frame	0.12 (0.18)	0.11 (0.26)	0.10 (0.26)	-0.05 (0.52)
Negative Frame	-0.37 (0.18)**	-0.34 (0.25)	-0.32 (0.25)	0.07 (0.56)
Stereotypical Frame	0.18 (0.15)	0.20 (0.26)	-0.39 (0.37)	-0.19 (0.53)
Warmth_Pro-Fem.	0.71 (0.17)***	0.71 (0.17)***	0.32 (0.25)	0.39 (0.44)
Positive Frame* Stereotypical Frame		0.02 (0.37)	0.06 (0.37)	0.02 (0.72)
Negative Frame* Stereotypical Frame		-0.08 (0.36)	-0.10 (0.36)	-0.73 (0.78)
Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.			0.77 (0.35)**	0.51 (0.61)
Positive Frame*No-Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				0.19 (0.59)
Negative Frame*No-Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				-0.48 (0.63)
Positive Frame* Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				0.26 (0.59)
Negative Frame* Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				0.31 (0.62)
Constant	5.63 (0.20)***	5.62 (0.23)***	5.92 (0.26)***	5.87 (0.39)***
R^2	0.01374	0.01379	0.01656	0.0175
N	1,741	1,741	1,741	1,741

*Standard Errors indicated in parentheses, Significance of coefficients: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01*

Continued: Table 3.6 – Linear Regression Models of Support for Proposed Policy on Treatments and SCM-Warmth.

	Evaluation at t_4			
	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16
Positive Frame	-0.08 (0.18)	-0.22 (0.26)	-0.24 (0.26)	-0.37 (0.53)
Negative Frame	-0.44 (0.18)**	-0.51 (0.26)*	-0.51 (0.26)*	-0.55 (0.56)
Stereotypical Frame	-0.29 (0.15)**	-0.43 (0.26)	-0.95 (0.36)***	-1.21 (0.53)**
Warmth_Pro-Fem.	0.43 (0.17)**	0.42 (0.17)**	0.06 (0.25)	-0.02 (0.46)
Positive Frame* Stereotypical Frame		0.28 (0.36)	0.30 (0.36)	0.31 (0.72)
Negative Frame* Stereotypical Frame		0.12 (0.36)	0.11 (0.36)	0.87 (0.74)
Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.			0.70 (0.34)**	1.05 (0.60)*
Positive Frame*No-Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				0.17 (0.60)
Negative Frame*No-Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				0.04 (0.63)
Positive Frame* Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				0.15 (0.57)
Negative Frame* Stereotypical Frame* Warmth_Pro-Fem.				-0.96 (0.57)*
Constant	6.23 (0.20)***	6.31 (0.23)***	6.59 (0.27)***	6.66 (0.41)***
R^2	0.009753	0.0101	0.01251	0.01504
N	1,746	1,746	1,746	1,746

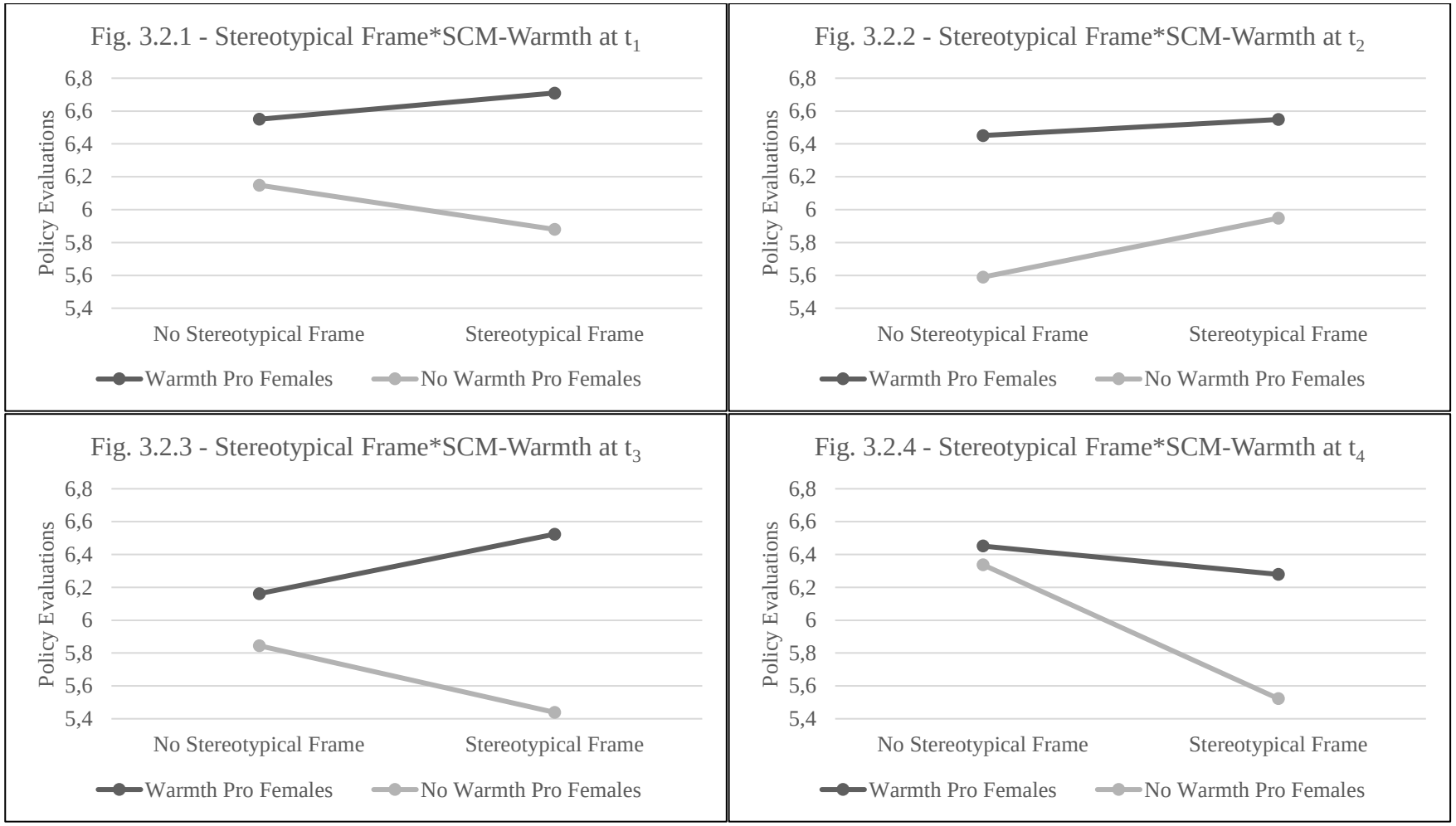
*Standard Errors indicated in parentheses, Significance of coefficients: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01*

These results are more or less also mirrored by the (statistically significant) interaction of the stereotypical frame condition and the SCM-Warmth variable at t_3 and t_4 (Figure 3.2.3-3.2.4). Again, respondents not inclined toward female refugees 'lashed back' in response to the stereotypical frame. At t_4 differently than at t_3, however, also respondents with prior-held stereotypes reacted negatively to the stereotypical frame.

The three-way interaction effect terms were not significant at any of the points in time (Models 4, 8, 12, and 16). This means that even when considering moderation through gender prior-held

stereotypes favoring female refugees, the valence and the stereotypical frame did not reinforce each other.

Figure 3.2.1-3.2.4 – Two-way Interaction Effects between Stereotypical Frame Condition and Stereotype Content Model on Warmth Toward Female Refugees at t_{1-4}.



4.5 Discussion and Outlook

This study empirically investigated the effects of stereotypical frames immediately, over time and in conjunction with another, complementary frame. Stereotypical frames are statements that emphasize characteristics that are stereotypically associated with a certain social group. Because they trigger well-known, accessible associations besides the actual information presented, I hypothesized that they would exhibit immediate and temporal framing effects. Additionally, I presumed that combining stereotypical frames with valence frames would provide even stronger framing effects, both immediately after treatment and over time. This expectation, again, was based on the presupposition that stereotypical frames cue further associations that make the information provided by the stereotypical frame more applicable and thus 'stickier'. Also, it was backed by findings in the literature on reinforcing dynamics between complementary frames.

The study presented a fictitious policy aimed at supporting refugees in Germany who experienced psychological trauma during their flight. Valence frames provided different angels on the effectiveness of the policy, while the stereotypical frame emphasized the vulnerability of one of the beneficiary groups of the policy, female refugees.

To be able to test stereotypical frames in combination with valence frames, effective valence frames had to be chosen. Hypotheses 1 and 4 indicated that this was, for the most part, successful: There were statistically significant differences between the differently valenced frames immediately after treatment, as well as during the delayed survey one day after the initial treatment. At the two other, delayed time points of the survey – one week or two weeks after initial treatment – mainly the negative frame caused a significant change of opinion in comparison to the other two. This is in line with literature arguing for a 'negativity bias', meaning that negatively valenced frames more often have lingering effects on opinions (see for instance Boydstun et al., 2019).

The neutral valence frame also demonstrated a dynamic that fits the idea of the 'negativity bias'. At first it appears puzzling that support for the proposed policy decreased at the delayed survey points for respondents in the neutral frame condition, given that the policy was framed neither particularly positive nor negative. However, the neutral frame implemented in this survey still provided information on the policy's effectiveness, or, more importantly, also on its *in*effectiveness. It appears that respondents particularly focused on the negative part of the neutral frame and were swayed in their opinions by it.

The stereotypical frames tested in this study did not operate as hypothesized (Hypotheses 2 and 5). Comparing mean support of the proposed policy between respondents in the stereotypical frame condition to those in the no-stereotypical frame condition, no statistically significant differences were found. This was neither the case immediately after treatment, nor at the delayed measurement points. What is more, there was no reinforcing effect at any given time point of the positive valence frame in conjunction with the stereotypical frame (Hypotheses 3 and 6). Also when considering combinations of the stereotypical frame with the other valence frames, no interaction effect was detectable. At first glance, these findings thus seem to indicate that stereotypical frames have no relevant effects on opinion formation. At second glance, however, there appears to be more to the picture:

When including prior-held gender stereotypes favoring female refugees as moderator of effects of the stereotypical frame, the stereotypical frame indeed increased support for the proposed policy – however mainly for those respondents with these prior-held gender stereotypes. This significant interaction also occurred one week and two weeks after the original treatment. The stereotypical frame – for individuals with corresponding characteristics, here prior-held gender stereotypes – thus indeed appears to have induced applicability considerations. Other than with cues, these led to framing effects immediately after treatment and over time.

What is most outstanding about these findings, is however that when looking closer, they seem to be mainly driven by the reactance to the frame of individuals with weaker or no female refugee-friendly stereotypes (compare with polarizing effects of cues in Nicholson, 2012). This somewhat contradicts that only respondents with prior-held gender stereotypes friendly toward female refugees employed applicability considerations. Instead, perhaps even respondents without such stereotypes employed applicability considerations and chose to react negatively to additional emphasis on female refugees' vulnerability. As only around a quarter of respondents did not hold gender stereotypes friendly toward female refugees, it is likely that these were individuals anyway highly dismissive of supporting refugees. Indeed, respondents who did not hold such stereotypes were positively correlated with a more right-wing political position (see Appendix C.1). It may be likely, that they reacted to an illustration of the plight of female refugees particularly skeptical and even hostile, because they generally disliked the accommodating, supportive approach to refugees that the presented policy represents.

Further, including prior-held stereotypes as moderator did not lead to a significant interaction of the valence frames with the stereotypical frame. This may be connected with the fact that the emphasis provided by the stereotypical frame – the emphasis on the vulnerability of women –

may not have been sufficiently compelling in the context of the proposed policy: As argued above, for a stereotypical frame to interact with the valence frame, it was modelled to reinforce support for the proposed policy offered by the positive valence frame. Even though there were good reasons to assume that thinking of vulnerable female refugees would increase backing for a policy targeted at supporting them (e.g., Fliethmann et al., 2024), this information may not have appeared important or applicable enough to respondents to cause mutual reinforcement of the two different frames. Maybe, instead of adding another consideration (the deservingness of the target group), a stereotypical frame on the consideration already provided by the valence frames (the effectiveness of the proposed policy) would have been more relevant to the evaluation of the policy and might have interacted better with the provided valence frames.

In addition to considering the interaction between the two frames, it is worth mentioning two reasons why this study might have missed potentially stronger stereotypical framing effects. For one, I explained the somewhat skewed reaction of respondents in the neutral frame condition by the negativity bias. I chose this form of a neutral frame instead of a 'true' control condition – i.e., with no mentioning of the policy's effectiveness – because of discussions on the differences of framing effects vis-à-vis new thematic information (Kaiser, 2020; Leeper and Slothuus, 2017). Valence frames provide (in a figurative sense) 'equivalent' thematic input. Therefore, any effects comparing different valence frames can be strictly ascribed to the frame, and not to differences in information-levels of respondents. This would not be the case comparing valence frames to a 'true' control condition without the information provided in the positive (or negative) frame. However, because of the lack of such a condition, I did not test the effectiveness of the stereotypical frame in isolation. It is, therefore, at least conceivable that a stronger effect of it may have been eclipsed by the different valence frames.

For another, I chose a highly salient issue, refugees in Germany, as the overall subject of the study. This choice was deliberate; I anticipated that a stereotypical frame would be most likely to evoke reactions in a context where stereotypes are prevalent. However, issues of high public salience are often less likely to facilitate strong framing effects, because many recipients already hold entrenched opinions (Chong and Druckman, 2010). Also in this study, the provided effect size estimates, r, of the valence framing effects linger around the common threshold value for a small effect size ($r = 0.1$). This suggests that also in the present study, because a high salience issue was chosen, the stereotypical frame may not have altered the mindset of recipients strongly enough to produce stronger framing effect. It is conceivable that, in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, also respondents in the no-stereotypical frame

condition may have especially held images of vulnerable female refugees in their minds when contemplating the proposed policy. This assumption is further supported by the reactance found among individuals without prior-held stereotypes. For some, the topic simply seemed to have been exhausted. [22]

Summing up, no conclusive picture about stereotypical frames can be drawn. On the one hand, framing effects of stereotypical frames were only measured weakly and only when moderated by prior-held stereotypes. As argued, these weak results may have been due to some deliberate choices on the design of the study. Any verification of these results would be well-advised to counteract these difficulties by: firstly, selecting content for the stereotypical frame that is even more applicable, and also aligning more closely with the valence frame; secondly, including a real control condition that could reasonably be argued not to be affected by a negativity bias; and thirdly, choosing a less salient issue than gender in the context of refugees in Germany.

On the other hand, the results on the exploratory research question maintain that there are effects of stereotypical frames, however that they may cancel each other out if the relevant moderator is not implicated. This is the case because, apart from the reinforcing effect on respondents with prior-held stereotypes, I additionally identified a backlash effect for respondents with weaker or other prior-held stereotypes in the first place.

This result, finally, would be an interesting starting point for future studies investigating effects of stereotypical frames and further explicating the findings of this study. This particular effect bears particular relevance given the overall role of stereotypes in society: When stereotypes lead to unjust oversimplification, such a backlash appears to be a healthy reaction. The reaction cautions frame recipients to reconsider the information they have received and to make up their own mind – instead of simply following the (manipulative) direction of a stereotypical frame. For instance, in the face of concocted, stereotypical fake news such a reaction might do some good and learning more about when it might occur would thus be helpful. *Why* precisely respondents reacted in such a way to the stereotypical frame lies outside the scope of this study. However, also this aspect would be interesting to consider in the future.

[22] This is anecdotally supported by the comment of one individual who simply wrote in the open comment field: “the topic is annoying”.

Declaration of Authorship

Hereby, I declare that I, Anselm Fliethmann, solely authored Chapters 1, 3 and 4, and Appendix A and C of this dissertation. Chapter 2 and Appendix B are co-authored with Verena Seibel and Daniel Degen. For these, responsibilities were divided as follows:

Anselm Fliethmann

- Secondary Study Conceptualization
- Validation of Formal Analysis Part 1 & Formal Analysis Part 2
- Writing:
    - Abstract – draft and review
    - Introduction – draft and review
    - Methods – review
    - Results – draft and review
    - Discussion and Conclusion – draft and review
- R Scripts
- Visualizations
    - Table 2.1 – editing
    - Table 2.2 and Figures 2.1 to 2.3

Verena Seibel

- Funding Acquisition
- Project Administration
- Secondary Study Conceptualization
- Writing:
    - Abstract –review
    - Introduction – draft and review
    - Methods – review
    - Results – draft and review
    - Discussion and Conclusion – draft and review

Daniel Degen

- Data Curation
- Formal Analysis Part 1

Verena Seibel and Daniel Degen jointly:

- Project and Preliminary Study Conceptualization
- Data Collection
- Writing:
    - Introduction
    - Methods
    - Results (direct effects only)
- Visualization: Table 2.1

A – Appendix for Chapter 2. Study 1

A.1 – Additional Analyses R Script

The additional analyses R Script "Study 1 – Additional Analyses", as well as the R script fitting the main results "Study 1 – Main Results" and the data set "DataStudy1.rds" can be accessed online at

https://cloud.uni-konstanz.de/index.php/s/NCcSQZknoYMFnEe

or are available upon request. Please contact Anselm Fliethmann at Anselm.Fliethmann@uni-konstanz.de.

A.2 – Descriptive Information on Politicians Posting

Family Name	First Name	Party	Facebook-Handle	Twitter-Handle	Sex	Number of Posts
AfD	-	AfD	alternativefuerde		party	61
Altmaier	Peter	CDU	peter.altmaier	peteraltmaier	male	26
Baerbock	Annalena	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	annalena.baerbock	ABaerbock	female	9
Barley	Katharina	SPD	katarina.barley	katarinabarley	female	4
Bartsch	Dietmar	DIE LINKE.	DietmarBartschMdB	DietmarBartsch	male	29
Bause	Margarete	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	margarete.bause	MargareteBause	female	17
Beck	Volker	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	VolkerBeckMdB	Volker_Beck	male	130
Beer	Nicola	FDP	nicolabeerfdp	nicolabeerfdp	female	36
Brandt	Michel	DIE LINKE.	michel.brandt.linke	michel_brandt_	male	1
Castellucci	Lars	SPD	larscastellucci	larscastellucci	male	48
CDU	-	CDU	CDU	CDU	party	59
CSU	-	CSU	csu		party	45
Diaby	Karamba	SPD	DrKarambaDiaby	KarambaDiaby	male	50
Esken	Saskia	SPD	EskenSaskia	EskenSaskia	female	19
Fabritius	Bernd	CSU	bernd.fabritius.7	berndfabritius	male	3
Fahimi	Yasmin	SPD	yasmin.fahimi	FahimiYasmin	female	7
FDP		FDP	FDP	fdp	party	52
Finckh-Krämer	Ute	SPD	UteFinckhKramer	NA	female	31
Frieser	Michael	CSU	michael.frieser.csu	MichaelFrieser	male	16
Gabriel	Sigmar	SPD	sigmar.gabriel	sigmargabriel	male	72
Gehring	Kai	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	kai.gehring	KaiGehring	male	54
Glöckner	Angelika	SPD	gloeckner.spd	A_Gloeckner	female	6
Göring-Eckardt	Katrin	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	GoeringEckardt	GoeringEckardt	female	17
Grötsch	Uli	SPD	uli.grot	uli_groetsch	male	3

BÜNDNIS 90/ DIE GRÜNEN	-	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	B90DieGruenen	Die_Gruenen	party	41
Gysi	Gregor	DIE LINKE.	gregor.gysi	gregorgysi	male	12
Hartmann	Sebastian	SPD	SebastianHartmannSPD	sebast_hartmann	male	9
Heil	Hubertus	SPD	mdb.hubertusheil	hubertus_heil	male	9
Heinrich	Frank	CDU	frankheinrichchemnitz	frankheinrich	male	9
Hoffmann	Thorsten	CDU	HoffmannMdB	HoffmannMdB	male	16
Hofreiter	Anton	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	anton.hofreiter	ToniHofreiter	male	33
Höger	Inge	DIE LINKE.	inge.hoger	NA	female	22
Jelpke	Ulla	DIE LINKE.	Ulla.Jelpke	UllaJelpke	female	224
Jensen	Gyde	FDP	JensenGyde	GydeJ	female	3
Kaiser	Elisabeth	SPD	ElisabethKaiser194	Kaiser_SPD	female	9
Kipping	Katja	DIE LINKE.	KatjaKipping	katjakipping	female	95
Klingbeil	Lars	SPD	klingbeil.lars	larsklingbeil	male	4
Koenigs	Tom	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	tom.koenigs.gruen	KoenigsGruen	male	12
Korte	Jan	DIE LINKE.	jankortemdb	jankortemdb	male	16
Kramp-Karrenbauer	Annegret	CDU	Annegret. KrampKarrenbauer	akk	female	4
Kuhle	Konstantin	FDP	konstantin.kuhle	KonstantinKuhle	male	4
Lindholz	Andrea	CSU	andrea.lindholz	AndreaLindholz	female	33
Lindner	Christian	FDP	lindner.christian	c_lindner	male	18
Die LINKE		LINKE	linkspartei	dieLinke	party	53
Lischka	Burkhard	SPD	burkhard.lischka	LischkaB	male	9
Lucke	Bernd	AfD	BerndLuckeMdEPaD	BerndLucke	male	13
Maas	Heiko	SPD	heiko.maas.98	HeikoMaas	male	78
Middelberg	Mathias	CDU	mathias.middelberg	NA	male	7
Mihalic	Irene	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	irene.mihalic	IreneMihalic	female	5
Mittag	Susanne	SPD	susanne.mittag.9	susanne_mittag	female	4
Nastic	Zaklin	DIE LINKE.	ZaklinNasticMdB	zaklinnastic	female	77

Notz	Konstantin	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	konstantin.vonnotz	KonstantinNotz	male	14
Nouripour	Omid	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	nouripour1	nouripour	male	7
Oppermann	Thomas	SPD	OppermannTho	ThomasOppermann	male	16
Ostermann	Tim	CDU	timostermann.de	OstermannMdB	male	15
Özdemir	Mahmut	SPD	oezdemir.spd	oezdemir_spd	male	11
Özdemir	Cem	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	Cem	cem_oezdemir	male	17
Özoğuz	Aydan	SPD	AydanOezoguz	oezoguz	female	1
Pantel	Sylvia	CDU	sylvia.pantel.54	SylviaPantel	female	12
Pau	Petra	DIE LINKE.	PetraPauMaHe	PetraPauMaHe	female	10
Peter	Simone	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	Simone.Peter.Gruene	peter_simone	female	110
Petry	Frauke	AfD	Dr.Frauke.Petry	FraukePetry	female	66
Polat	Filiz	BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN	Filiz.Polat.Bundestag	filizgreen	female	88
Reichenbach	Gerold	SPD	gerold.reichenbach	g_reichenbach	male	32
Renner	Martina	DIE LINKE.	martina.renner67	MartinaRenner	female	24
Riexinger	Bernd	DIE LINKE.	riexinger.bernd	b_riexinger	male	80
Schäfer	Anita	CDU	SchaeferMdB	schaefercdu	female	3
Scholz	Olaf	SPD	olafscholz	OlafScholz	male	15
Schulz	Martin	SPD	martinschulz	MartinSchulz	male	2
Schuster	Armin	CDU	armin.schuster	armin_schuster	male	1
Schwabe	Frank	SPD	frank.schwabe.94	FrankSchwabe	male	34
Söder	Markus	CSU	markus.soder.75	Markus_Soeder	male	15
SPD	-	SPD	SPD	spdde	party	70
Strasser	Benjamin	FDP	strasser.fdp	bstrasser	male	1
Tauber	Peter	CDU	tauber.peter	petertauber	male	28
Tempel	Frank	DIE LINKE.	franktempelmdb	frank_tempel	male	5
Teuteberg	Linda	FDP	teuteberg.linda	LindaTeuteberg	female	3
Wagenknecht	Sarah	DIE LINKE.	sahra.wagenknecht	SWagenknecht	female	52
Warken	Nina	CDU	warkennina	ninawarken	female	9

Weidel	Alice	AfD	aliceweidel	Alice_Weidel	female	17
Wendt	Marian	CDU	marian.wendt	MdbWendt	female	12
Widmann-Mauz	Annette	CDU	widmannmauz	AWidmannMauz	female	11
Ziemiak	Paul	CDU	paulziemiak	PaulZiemiak	male	18
Zimmer	Matthias	CDU	drmatthiaszimmer	matthiaszimmer	male	15

A.3 – Refugee-Keywords and -Synonyms

Asylant*	Ausreißer*	Geflücht*
Asylbewerber*	Auswander*	Heimkehrer*
Asylwerber*	*einwander*	*migrant*
Asylsuchende*	Exil*	Migration
Ausbrecher*	Flüchtling*	vertrieben*
Aussiedler*	Fluchthelfer*	Zuwander*

‘*’ indicates the possibility for additional endings/beginnings of the word, e.g., ‘*migrant*’ also includes ‘Immigrant’

A.4 – Distribution of Posts per Platform and Party

		Facebook								Twitter								
		AfD	CDU	CSU	FDP	Greens	Linke	SPD	**Sub-Total**	AfD	CDU	CSU	FDP	Greens	Linke	SPD	**Sub-Total**	**Total**
October – December 2015	Universalism	2	10	3	11	28	43	37	134	0	9	0	2	57	62	38	168	302
	Control	0	2	1	1	14	9	10	37	0	3	0	0	17	9	7	36	73
	Attitude	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	6
	Reciprocity	15	8	5	4	7	4	24	67	2	4	0	1	11	5	13	36	103
	Identity	7	11	5	3	17	16	18	77	2	4	0	1	15	6	11	39	116
	Need	8	20	11	18	49	104	55	265	2	11	0	7	53	68	40	181	446
	Legal	6	21	10	9	5	21	18	90	0	4	2	2	17	11	9	45	135
	Rejectionism	13	9	20	9	0	6	2	59	5	17	6	1	2	4	3	38	97
	"Not applicable"	29	94	37	23	29	47	122	381	32	131	7	38	202	130	198	738	1,119
	Sub-Total	81	175	94	79	149	250	287	1,115	43	183	15	52	375	295	319	1,282	2,397
January – March 2016	Universalism	3	10	1	6	22	43	54	139	0	5	1	3	45	54	40	150	287
	Control	10	3	2	0	6	25	9	55	1	1	0	0	10	17	3	32	87
	Attitude	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	6
	Reciprocity	25	12	10	5	5	12	33	102	2	6	2	0	4	5	13	32	134
	Identity	15	10	1	5	10	11	15	67	0	6	2	1	21	6	7	43	110
	Need	22	15	15	7	52	95	49	255	3	12	0	6	55	61	30	165	422
	Legal	27	19	4	8	10	25	13	106	0	5	0	3	14	23	5	50	156
	Rejectionism	18	10	22	3	1	2	8	64	0	10	5	1	2	3	8	29	93
	"Not applicable"	31	41	44	34	18	52	104	324	7	94	38	29	104	71	147	490	814
	Sub-Total	153	121	100	68	124	266	285	1,117	13	140	48	43	255	240	253	992	2109
	Total	234	296	194	147	273	516	572	2,232	56	323	63	95	630	535	572	2,274	4,506

Note: Posts could include multiple deservingness attributes, so that a post could be coded with several deservingness codes. "Not applicable" codes were however only applied to posts that included not deservingness attributes at all.

A.5 – The Codebook

The Codebook "Appendix A.5 – The Codebook – Measuring Deservingness Frames" is currently only available in German and can be accessed online at

https://cloud.uni-konstanz.de/index.php/s/NCcSQZknoYMFnEe

or is available upon request. Please contact Anselm Fliethmann at Anselm.Fliethmann@uni-konstanz.de.

A.6 – Party Goals in Terms of Policy-Seeking versus Office-Seeking

	Levels of Intra-Party Democracy (summing up multiple indicators on intra-party democracy for the 2017 federal election; Höhne, 2023)	Policy Position (Right-left position of party in 2013 and 2017, as coded by Lehmann et al. (2024))		Party Size (in percent of votes during the 2013 and 2017 federal elections; Deutscher Bundestag, 2024)		Approximate Allocation as Office- or Policy-seeking
		2013	2017	2013	2017	
AfD	High	- 2.74	17.43	4.7%	12.6%	Policy-seeking
CSU	Low	2.56	2.76	41.5%	32.9%	Office-seeking
CDU	Low					Office-seeking
FDP	Medium – low	14.04	0.58	4.8%	10.7%	In between
SPD	Low	-23.57	-21.45	25.7%	20.5%	Office-seeking
Grüne	Medium	-19.60	-21.06	8.4%	8.9%	In between
Linke	High	-34.55	-41.91	8.6%	9.2%	Policy-seeking

B – Appendix for Chapter 3. Study 2

- Appendix B.1 – Additional Analyses R Script
- Appendix B.1 – Robustness Checks

B.1 – Additional Analyses R Script

The additional analyses R Script "Study 2 – Additional Analyses", as well as the R script fitting the main results "Study 2 – Main Results" can be accessed online at

https://cloud.uni-konstanz.de/index.php/s/NCcSQZknoYMFnEe

or are available upon request. Please contact Anselm Fliethmann at Anselm.Fliethmann@uni-konstanz.de.

The data set "DataStudy2.rds" is also available upon request. Please contact either Anselm Fliethmann at Anselm.Fliethmann@uni-konstanz.de or Verena Seibel at v.m.k.seibel@uu-nl.

B.2 – Robustness Checks

Table B.2.1 – Random-Intercept OLS Regression of Vignette Evaluations on Vignette Characteristics with Interactions Gender*Religion.

	Model m1sex2	
	Basic Model	
	Beta	S.E.
Female (vs. male)	0.067	(0.097)
Vocational Training (vs. No Training)	0.151	(0.062)**
University Degree (vs. No Training)	0.306	(0.062)***
Some German (vs. No German)	0.073	(0.061)
Fluent German (vs. No German)	0.164	(0.062)***
Looking for Job (vs. Not Looking)	0.962	(0.050)***
Female*Muslim	0.271	(0.135)**
Female*Christian	0.205	(0.148)
Fled from War (vs. For Econ. Reasons)	0.571	(0.050)***
Muslim (vs. No Religion)	-0.201	(0.050)***
Christian (vs. No Religion)	-0.077	(0.094)
From Syria (vs. From Eastern Ukraine)	0.128	(0.064)**
From Eritrea (vs. From Eastern Ukraine)	0.057	(0.062)
Age	0.004	(0.002)*
Money	-0.009	(0.000)***
(Intercept)	2.031	(0.157)***
Observations	3668	
R^2	0.707	
Adjusted R^2	0.706	

Figure B.2.1 – Two-way Interaction Effects between Gender and Religion.

Attached Standard Errors.

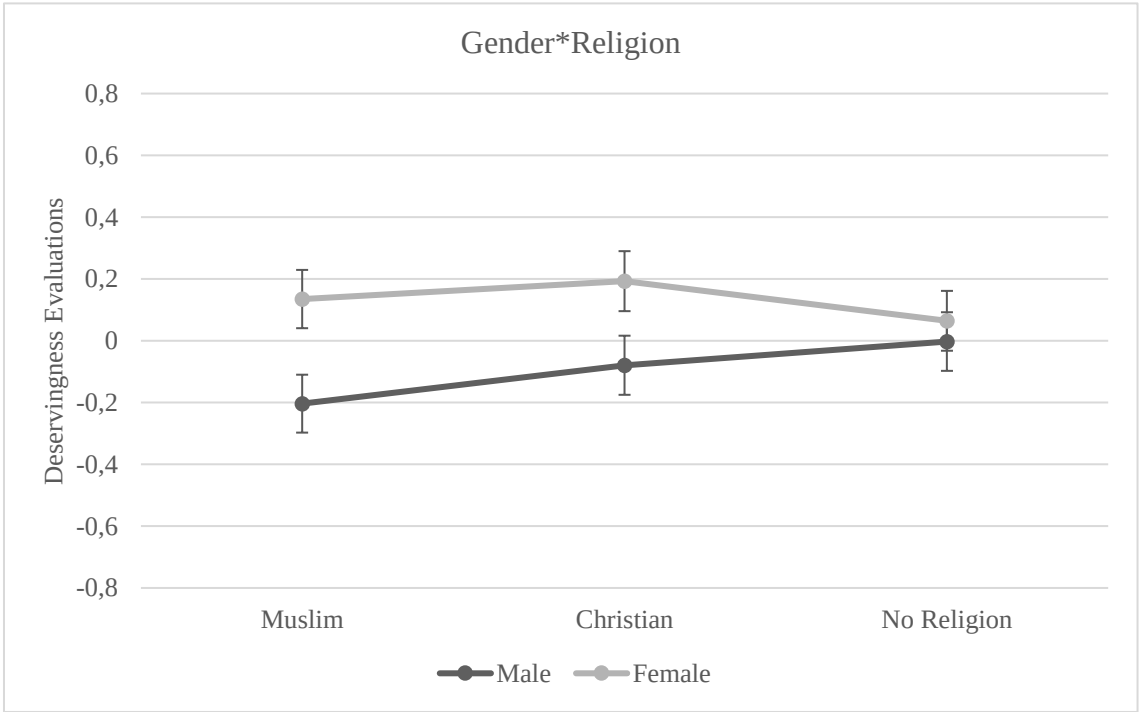


Table B.2.2 – Random-Intercept OLS Regression of Vignette Evaluations on Vignette Characteristics with Interactions Gender*Country of Origin.

	Model m1sex3	
	Basic Model	
	Beta	S.E.
Female (vs. male)	0.391	(0.095)***
Vocational Training (vs. No Training)	0.126	(0.062)**
University Degree (vs. No Training)	0.279	(0.061)***
Some German (vs. No German)	0.067	(0.061)
Fluent German (vs. No German)	0.156	(0.061)**
Looking for Job (vs. Not Looking)	0.967	(0.050)***
Female*From Syria	-0.246	(0.149)*
Female*From Eritrea	-0.257	(0.137)*
Fled from War (vs. For Econ. Reasons)	0.566	(0.050)***
Muslim (vs. No Religion)	-0.074	(0.062)***
Christian (vs. No Religion)	-0.005	(0.064)
From Syria (vs. From Eastern Ukraine)	0.220	(0.096)**
From Eritrea (vs. From Eastern Ukraine)	0.182	(0.090)**
Age	0.004	(0.002)*
Money	-0.009	(0.000)***
(Intercept)	1.940	(0.156)***
Observations	3668	
R^2	0.707	
Adjusted R^2	0.706	

Figure B.2.2- Two-way Interaction Effects between Gender and Country of Origin.

Attached Standard Errors.

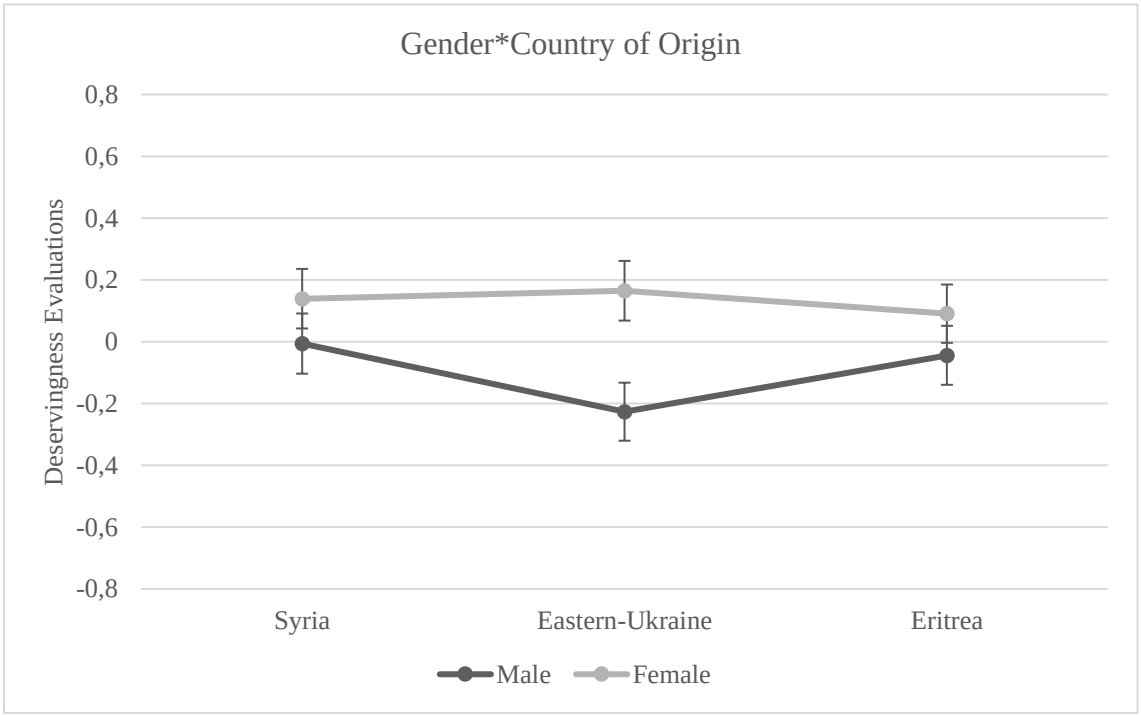


Table B.2.3 – Random-Intercept OLS Regression of Vignette Evaluations on Vignette Characteristics with Interactions Education*Language Skills.

	Model m1education5	
	Basic Model	
	Beta	S.E.
Female (vs. male)	0.243	(0.051)***
Vocational Training (vs. No Training)	0.382	(0.109)**
University Degree (vs. No Training)	0.643	(0.111)***
Some German (vs. No German)	0.372	(0.114)***
Fluent German (vs. No German)	0.489	(0.108)***
Looking for Job (vs. Not Looking)	0.952	(0.050)***
Vocational Training*Some German	-0.298	(0.162)*
University Degree*Some German	-0.577	(0.165)***
Vocational Training*Fluent German	-0.432	(0.157)***
University Degree*Fluent German	-0.497	(0.166)***
Fled from War (vs. For Econ. Reasons)	0.602	(0.050)***
Muslim (vs. No Religion)	-0.093	(0.061)
Christian (vs. No Religion)	-0.026	(0.063)
From Syria (vs. From Eastern Ukraine)	0.165	(0.066)**
From Eritrea (vs. From Eastern Ukraine)	0.101	(0.063)
Age	0.003	(0.002)
Money	-0.009	(0.000)***
(Intercept)	1.811	(0.160)***
Observations	3668	
R^2	0.708	
Adjusted R^2	0.707	

Figure B.2.3 – Two-way Interaction Effects between Education and Language Skills.

Attached Standard Errors.

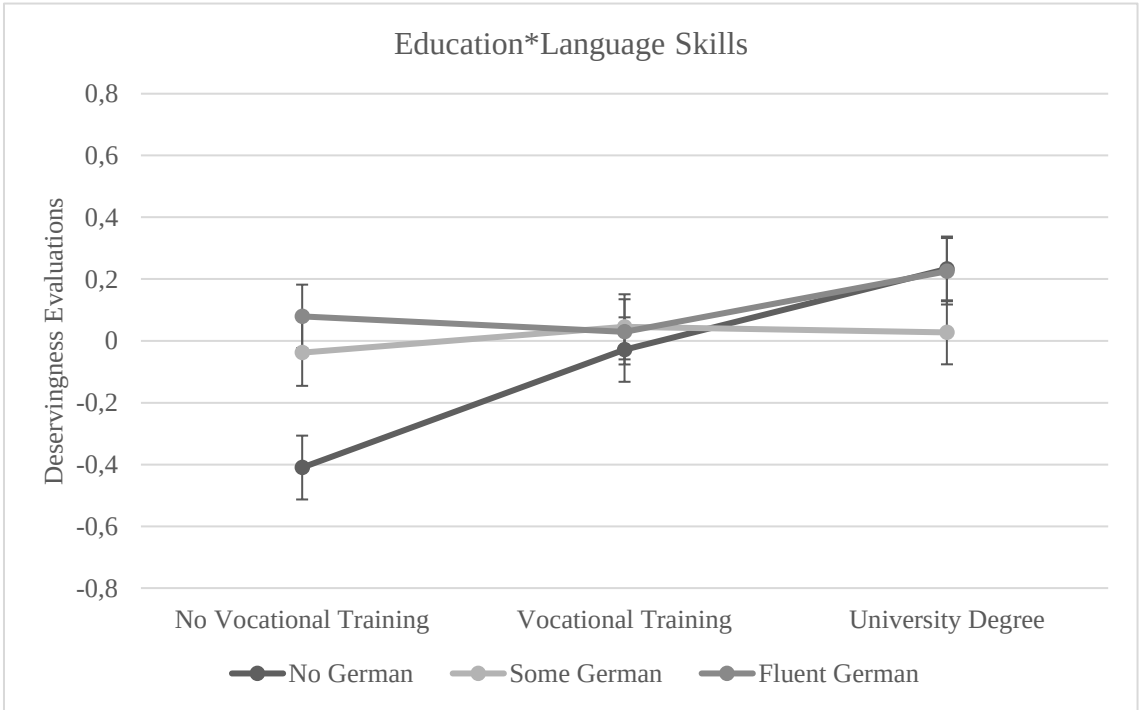


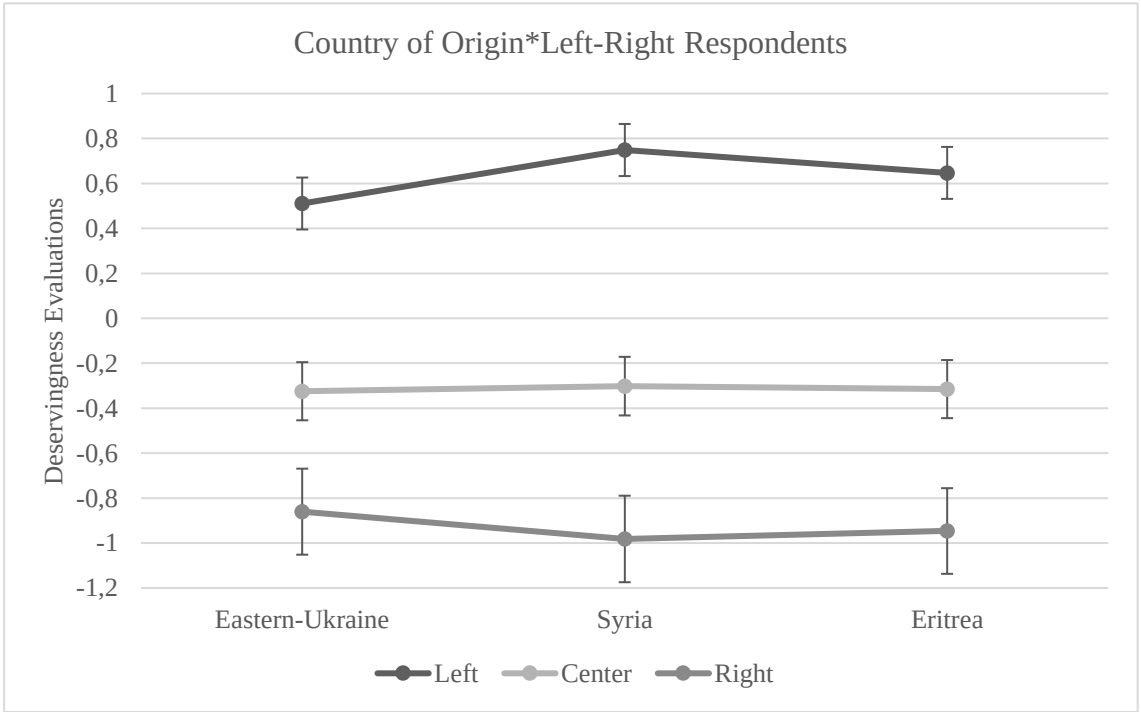
Table B.2.4 – Random-Intercept OLS Regression of Vignette Evaluations on Vignette Characteristics and Respondent Age.

	Model m1respage1	
	Basic Model	
	Beta	S.E.
Female (vs. male)	0.221	(0.050)***
Vocational Training (vs. No Training)	0.146	(0.061)**
University Degree (vs. No Training)	0.297	(0.061)***
Some German (vs. No German)	0.072	(0.061)
Fluent German (vs. No German)	0.174	(0.061)***
Looking for Job (vs. Not Looking)	0.969	(0.050)***
Respondent Age	0.007	(0.007)
Fled from War (vs. For Econ. Reasons)	0.572	(0.050)***
Muslim (vs. No Religion)	-0.070	(0.061)
Christian (vs. No Religion)	-0.005	(0.062)
From Syria (vs. From Eastern Ukraine)	0.109	(0.062)*
From Eritrea (vs. From Eastern Ukraine)	0.061	(0.061)
Age	0.004	(0.002)*
Money	-0.009	(0.000)***
(Intercept)	-12.580	(13.817)
Observations	3668	

Table B.2.5 – Random-Intercept OLS Regression of Vignette Evaluations on Vignette Characteristics and Left-Right Placement of Respondents with Interactions Country of Origin*Left-Right_Respondents.

	Model m1respleftright8	
	Basic Model	
	Beta	S.E.
Female (vs. male)	0.225	(0.050)***
Vocational Training (vs. No Training)	0.136	(0.061)**
University Degree (vs. No Training)	0.296	(0.061)***
Some German (vs. No German)	0.068	(0.061)
Fluent German (vs. No German)	0.174	(0.061)***
Looking for Job (vs. Not Looking)	0.954	(0.050)***
Center Respondents (vs. Left Respondents)	-0.835	(0.174)***
Right Respondents (vs. Left Respondents)	-1.371	(0.224)***
Syria*Center Respondents	-0.215	(0.136)
Eritrea*Center Respondents	-0.127	(0.134)
Syria*Right Respondents	-0.360	(0.176)**
Eritrea*Right Respondents	-0.222	(0.173)
Fled from War (vs. For Econ. Reasons)	0.576	(0.050)***
Muslim (vs. No Religion)	-0.067	(0.061)
Christian (vs. No Religion)	0.019	(0.062)
From Syria (vs. From Eastern Ukraine)	0.238	(0.090)***
From Eritrea (vs. From Eastern Ukraine)	0.136	(0.090)
Age	0.004	(0.002)
Money	-0.009	(0.000)***
(Intercept)	2.532	(0.172)***
Observations	3647	

Figure B.2.4 – Two-way Interaction Effects between Country of Origin and Respondents Left-Right Placement. Attached Standard Errors.



C – Appendix for Chapter 4. Study 3

- Appendix C.1 – Additional Analyses R Script
- Appendix C.2 – The Codebook – Survey Experiment Study 3

C.1 – Additional Analyses R Script

The additional analyses R Script “Study 3 – Additional Analyses”, as well as the R script fitting the main results “Study 3 – Main Results” and the data set “DataStudy3.rds” can be accessed online at

https://cloud.uni-konstanz.de/index.php/s/NCcSQZknoYMFnEe

or are available upon request. Please contact Anselm Fliethmann at Anselm.Fliethmann@uni-konstanz.de.

C.2 – The Codebook – Survey Experiment Study 3

The Codebook including explanations of the data set “The Codebook – Survey Experiment Study 3” is currently only available in German and can be accessed online at

https://cloud.uni-konstanz.de/index.php/s/NCcSQZknoYMFnEe

or is available upon request. Please contact Anselm Fliethmann at Anselm.Fliethmann@uni-konstanz.de.

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