

The influence of economic and social threat on voting behaviour after the economic crisis of 2008

by

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ABSTRACT

The scope of this thesis is to explore the influence economic and social threat have on the voting behaviour of citizens from seven Western and Central European countries, after the economic crisis of 2008. My analytical endeavour places this thesis in line with previous political psychology research on the influence of attitudes and beliefs on the electoral behaviour of individuals. Drawing on the works of Robert Altemeyer on right-wing authoritarianism, the two observational studies will argue that the resurgence of right-wing politics in contemporary Europe, in the context of the 2008 economic malaise, is a function of the subjective perceived economic threat mediated by individual authoritarian attitudes. By employing a cross-sectional analysis of the data available through the 2010 European Social Survey and building a novel index meant to assess individual levels of authoritarianism I proceed to explore to what extent economic factors played a role in the resurgence of right-wing populist parties. Findings show that economic threat did not have a cumulative effect on people's authoritarian attitudes, though stronger authoritarian attitudes among European citizens were mainly caused by economic distress and were significant in predicting prejudice against immigrants but not the choice to vote for right-wing parties.

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Introduction

As right-wing populist parties¹ have become, more often in the last decade, legitimate contenders and seat winners in national parliamentary elections across several European countries (Annex 1), I will study this phenomenon using the theoretical and methodological tools prevalent in the field of political psychology. James Kuklinski (2002, p.2) defines political psychology as “the study of mental processes that underlie political judgments and decision making” and drawing on the writings of Sullivan, Rahn, and Rudolph (in Kuklinski 2002, p.23) three periods of scholarship can be identified, as characterized by their research focus: *personality, attitude theory and change* and *human cognition and information processing*. Understanding and predicting the behaviour of individuals is the fundamental goal of psychology.

Theories of personality have attempted to describe and explain people’s behaviour by assessing the underlying psychological differences between individuals. Political psychology contends that in order to determine which individuals are more likely to vote or change their ideological orientations I need to examine their individual characteristics. Extensive studies have shown that political orientation can be inferred by knowing the general traits and values of a person. Nevertheless, an individual’s personality is more than the sum of stable traits. The contemporary framework for the study of trait personality relies on the ‘Big Five’² (also known as NEO PI-R³), the taxonomy of choice for psychology researchers (Mondak, 2010). As such, liberals have been shown to be more open-minded as opposed to conservatives who are

¹ This general term will be used through the rest of this thesis to encompass all parties that are of the right-wing kind, may they be traditional or post-industrial parties, in accordance with the view of Piero Ignazi (in Schain, Zolberg and Hossay, 2002).

² The five dimensions of personality are believed to be: Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism (Spielberger, 2004);

³ Neuroticism Extraversion Openness Personality Inventory-Revised, developed by Robert McCrae and Paul Costa, is theory-driven as opposed to the original lexical approach of the Big Five by Saucier and Goldberg which was data-driven (Millon and Lerner 2003, p.66) and has been shown to be universal in its applicability. The effects of genetic and environmental variability differed in magnitude and not in kind when the test was applied on Canadian and German samples (Millon and Lerner 2003, p.74).

characterized as being cautious and conventional (Thórisdóttir et al., 2007). As Jost (2006) argues differences between liberals and conservatives can be assessed by using two of the Big Five personality dimensions, namely Openness to Experience, which is higher among liberals, and Conscientiousness, which is higher among conservatives. Nevertheless, there are those who argue that the relationship between personality and political ideologies is not causal, but rather correlative, both being determined by shared genetic variance (Verhulst, Eaves and Hatemi, 2011).

In the last couple of years, right-wing populist groups have been gaining momentum and exhibited growing electoral support in fourteen European countries: Austria – *Freedom Party* (FPO), Belgium – *Flemish Block* (VB), Denmark – *Danish People's Party* (DF), Finland – *True Finns*, France – *National Front* (FN), Germany – *Republican Party* (REP), *German People's Union* (DVU) and *National Democratic Party* (NPD), Greece – *Hellenic Front*, Italy – *Northern League*, Hungary – *Jobbik*, The Netherlands – *Party of Freedom* (PVV), Norway – *Progress Party* (FrP), Portugal – *Popular Party*, Switzerland – *Swiss People's Party* (SVP), United Kingdom – *British National Party* (BNP) and *English Defence League* (EDL).

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the influence of economic and social threat on the voting behaviour of citizens from seven Western and Central European countries, mediated by authoritarianism, after the economic crisis of 2008. The literature on this topic – the relationship between economic threat and electoral preference for right-wing parties – is rather scant. The *right-wing authoritarianism* (RWA) approach popularized by Altemeyer (1998) is more appropriate to explain the subtle attitudinal differences, as these are not fixed personality traits, but rather vary according to the motivational goals of an individual on a continuum between social cohesion and collective security. Henceforth, our analytical endeavour places this thesis in line with previous research on the influence of attitudes and beliefs on electoral behaviour of individuals. The two observational studies of this thesis, will argue that the resurgence of right-

wing authoritarian parties in contemporary Europe can be explained, in the context of the 2008 economic crisis and increased societal uncertainty, as a function of the subjective perceived economic threat (Hatemi et al., 2009).

This paper provides an up-to-date perspective on the effects of the 2008 economic crisis on the voting behaviour of European citizens by employing a cross-sectional analysis of the data available through the 2010 European Social Survey. Apart from trying to explain the strengthening support for right-wing parties as a function of personal subjective economic malaise, the observational studies will also focus on clarifying to what extent economic factors played a role in making people more (or less) authoritarian between electoral cycles. For this, using available attitudinal data from the ESS I have created a reliable and valid individual authoritarian-attitudes scale (IAAS) which will be used in all subsequent analyses (in turn, as explanatory and response variable). This scale was constructed using the theoretical foundation of Altemeyer's own RWA scale (discussed in Chapter 1) and relying on the three dimensional attitudinal structure: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression and conventionalism.

The scholarship on the relationship between fear and politico-economic conservative behaviour is rich when the American political sphere is concerned (Adorno, 1950; Altemeyer, 1981, 1988, 1996; Bartels, 1993; Duckitt, 1992; Jost, 2009; Oxley et al., 2008; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Such studies have mostly focused on how mass-media and political discourse may manipulate public opinion through fear, threat or anxiety inducing cues and how negative emotions are employed to influence voter's support for certain issues, such as war, terrorism or abortion (Altheide, 1997; Hetherington, 1996; Kushner, 2005; Lupia and Menning, 2009; Pratto and John, 1991).

The American two-party political system is propitious for such academic inquiries as voters get to choose between parties whose policy stance and ideological orientation are

unequivocal. However, when considering the predominant multipartite political systems of most European countries, the difficulty of conducting similar studies significantly increases. On the one hand, the process of dealignment that is characteristic to contemporary European democracies has led to an ideological convergence of large parties along the left-right policy continuum. This makes it easier for voters to change their allegiance from one electoral cycle to the other, but also for parties to defend issues that are outside their ideological boundaries (Best and Lem, 2011; Powell and Tucker, 2012). So, given the decreasing ideological distinctiveness of parties, voters tend to evaluate them instrumentally rather than expressively (Tóka in Klingemann, 2009, p.269).

On the other hand, the heterogeneous socio-cultural background of European citizens makes the external validity of studies not readily comparable across countries. Moreover, studies on the impact of fear on political preferences have contended that people usually tend to experience and process fear in a similar manner and have focused on identifying the various environmental stimuli that trigger fear responses. But then how can it be that people's reactions to threat and fear differ significantly even when the same fear stimuli is applied in controlled experiments? A most likely answer is that people differ substantially in their underlying dispositions to cope with and react to stressful cues or events (Oxley et al., 2005; Verhulst, Eaves and Hatemi, 2011).

As the analytical framework for this thesis's proposed studies on the resurgence of right-wing parties support after the economic crisis of 2008 relies on measuring and differentiating between individuals with strong and weak authoritarian attitudes, the personality approach shall be discussed further in Chapter 1. An overview of the foundational study on authoritarian personality (Adorno et al., 1950) will be followed by a comparative examination of the literature on the methodological applications of Bob Altemeyer's (1981, 1988) *right-wing authoritarianism* (RWA) scale and Sidanius and Pratto's (1994) *social domination orientation* (SDO) theory.

Chapter 2 is exclusively dedicated for the assessment of recent works exploring the mediated effects of economic related anxiety, fear and threat on strengthening right-wing electoral support and conservative ideology. In Chapter 3 I will detail the research questions, hypotheses, case selection strategy, data sources, operationalization of concepts, statistical procedures and results of the two main studies on authoritarianism, the empirical core of this thesis. Lastly, Chapter 4 will discuss the substantive significance of our findings and describe opportunities for future research. Statistical evidence contradicts the hypothesis that economic threat was cumulative, meaning that people who lived in an (assumed) uncertain and hostile socio-economic context did not grow more authoritarian between 2008 and 2010. Nevertheless, stronger authoritarian attitudes among European citizens (as measured by the IAAS) were mainly caused by economic distress (job insecurity, having to cope on diminished household incomes and evaluations of ‘present’ economic well-being) and were significant in predicting prejudice against immigrants but not the choice to vote for right-wing parties.

Chapter 1: The study of authoritarianism

“The everyday response to fear is to push it aside and run away from it, to cover it up through will, determination, resistance, escape.” (Jiddu Krishnamurti)

A considerable amount of time has been dedicated in the last fifty years by psychologists towards explaining the mechanisms of prejudice. On the whole, scholars have been divided along two main lines of research. Proceeding from the seminal Berkley studies of Adorno et al. (1950) on the authoritarian personality, prejudice was studied in relation with an individual's personality characteristics (Altemeyer, 1981, 1988, 1996; Duckitt et al., 2002; Duriez and Hiel, 2002; Ekehammar and Akrami, 2004; McFarland, 2010; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). The competing explanations follow the work of Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) who devised the *social identity theory* and claimed that a person's identity is defined and shaped by his belonging to certain social groups.

Behaviour can be predicted if a person's attitudes, beliefs and values are known, when personality traits are salient. In contrast, the likely behaviour of a person can be inferred by observing the goals and values of the group he belongs to, when social identity is salient (Millon and Lerner 2003, p.487). As such, prejudice was linked to people's position in society; people identifying with self-categorized in-groups are likely to discriminate those they perceive to belong to out-groups in order to improve their self-image (Guimond 2000; Schmitt et al. 2003; Turner and Reynolds 2003). As Whitley and Kite (2010, p.26) note, most studies on social psychology that focused on prejudice were conducted in North America, while similar works carried out by European scholars emerged after the late 1970s.

1.1 Adorno and the authoritarian personality

“From these prejudices there arises conflict, transient joys and suffering. But we are unconscious of this, unconscious that we are slaves to certain forms of tradition, to social and political environment, to false values.” (Jiddu Krishnamurti)

Authoritarianism is among the most widely studied dispositional concepts in political psychology. (Lavine, 2005) and for decades, this approach served as the main explanation of fascism and antidemocratic thoughts or action in psychology. (Spielberger, 2004, p.251) The concept of authoritarianism began to germinate amid the Great Depression when Freudo-Marxist Wilhelm Reich published his notable work *Die Massenpsychologie des Faschismus* (The Mass Psychology of Fascism), a study which tried to explain the increased popularity of the fascist NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party) during the presidency of Paul von Hindenburg (from 1 million to approximately 17 million voters). In short, it postulated that “ideologies of subordination to authority were internalized by subordinate individuals and eventually became a stable personality structure” (Spielberger, 2004, p.251). Moreover, the academic core of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm and Herbert Marcuse) laid the foundation for the concept of authoritarian personality as a function of social contexts; specifically the emotional experiences of children brought-up in punitive families.

The roots of this avenue of research in social sciences can be traced back to 1950s when *The Authoritarian Personality* was published as part of the series, *Studies in Prejudice*. Its authors, Theodore Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford (1950) pursued to explain the psychologically embedded causes of deviant behaviours such as fascism, anti-Semitism and ethnocentrism. Van Hiel (2009, p.34) goes to note that “[...] authoritarianism is related to personality disorders and psychopathology. According to Wilson (1973, p. 12), the

authoritarian personality syndrome was conceived by Adorno et al. as ‘a kind of pathological syndrome like psychopathology or schizophrenia’ [...]. The goal of Adorno and his colleagues was to understand the psychological mechanisms that were conducive to totalitarian attitudes (Arendt, 1973; Cassinelli, 1960, p.69) in order to prevent the resurgence of fascism in society.

It is of no coincidence that this study emerged five years after Second World War when explanations for the mass support of fascist regimes in Germany and Italy were sought after. Most of all, it is of delightful irony that fear of similar political movements gaining momentum in American society (which first emerged around 1930s, after the Great Depression) prompted the inquiry into what caused people to, as coined by Erich Fromm (1941), “escape from freedom”. The driving motivation behind the research of Adorno et al. was the identification of those personality traits that may lead a person to be swayed by antidemocratic ideologies. As such, it was assumed that there was a Fascist personality, the only viable explanation at the time for the behaviour of Nazis supporters in Germany and Fascists in Italy.

The analytical endeavour of Adorno et al. resulted in the identification of a stable ideological construct based on the concepts of anti-Semitism, ethnocentrism and conservatism, operationalized by 38 items which would be known as the F-scale. According to Adorno et al. they tried to capture “[...] a more or less enduring structure in the person that renders him receptive to antidemocratic propaganda (Adorno et al., 1950, p.228)” (Enyedi and Erös, 1999, p.10). The main components of the authoritarian syndrome that were thought to be related to prejudice, in accordance with the Freudian psychodynamic theory that regarded the development of personality as a resultant of having experienced physical punishment in early childhood (Whitley and Kite, 2010, p.28), are: conventionalism (the strict adherence to the values of the middle class), authoritarian submission (uncritical acceptance of the moral authority of the in-group), authoritarian aggression (or the propensity to condemn or punish those identified as being part of the out-group and/or who do not respect the conventional values of the in-group), anti-

intraception (denial of those who are deemed as “tender-minded” or are seen as having a weak ego), superstition and stereotypy (not part of the original F-scale; indicative of an irrational way of thinking), power (perceiving that relationships among individuals are always hierarchical; assertion that the strong should always dominate the weak), destructiveness and cynicism (a generalized hostility and vilification of the human), projectivity (the disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world; the projection outwards of unconscious emotional impulses) and sexuality (Enyedi and Erös, 1999, p.11; Spielberger, 2004, p.252).

Despite the revolutionary nature of the research carried by Adorno et al. there were several methodological shortcomings that received due criticism: (a) use of non-representative samples; thus the inability to generalize their conclusions, (b) reliance on poorly constructed attitude surveys that allowed response bias, (c) failure to establish controlled procedures for content analysis of the clinical interviews, and (d) reluctance to seriously consider alternative explanations for their empirical findings. Most importantly, “even if one were to accept the validity of the authoritarian syndrome, the original researchers were never able to make a convincing case that it was caused by authoritarian childrearing practices.” (Jost, Sidanius 2004, p.41)

All in all, the key findings of Adorno’s research showed that anti-Semitism, conservative attitudes and prejudice towards out-groups “covaried strongly to form a unitary attitudinal syndrome” (Jost, Kay, Thorisdottir, 2009, p.293). At the time, this evidence convinced researchers that ideological beliefs could be placed on a unidimensional continuum, ranging from liberal attitudes at one end, to conservative or fascist attitudes at the other. Moreover, it was observed that clear individual differences existed between those who scored high and low in prejudice and ethnocentrism. These results prompted follow-up studies and attempts to improve on their theoretical framework. Noteworthy is the work of Gordon Allport who in 1954 proposed a revised model of what constitutes an authoritarian personality focusing on the ego weakness.

Subsequently, a person exhibiting an authoritarian personality cannot tolerate: the absence of structure, order and security in society; unconventionality, novelty, and change. This in turn explains their desire for coercive, repressive social control and support for right-wing leaders and political parties (Ibidem). This focus on the submissive and more fearful nature of authoritarians (a stark departure from the original view proposed by Adorno of a powerful, tough and dominant personality) will become the cornerstone of Bob Altemeyer's work.

As I have mentioned, Adorno et al. postulated that the personality traits akin to an authoritarian are formed in childhood as the result of a repressive family and social environment; suppressed feelings of anger and resentment towards parents are thus redirected towards others. They were able to distinguish and measure (via the F-scale) differences in people's attitudes, which lead them to infer there was a stable personality dimension causing them. Moreover, it was thought that a person's attitudes were unidimensionally located on a liberal – conservative continuum and that the ideological charge of these attitudes could be explained by a common set of causal factors (Jost, Kay, Thorisdottir, 2009, p.294). Nevertheless, despite the insightfulness of Adorno's study of the authoritarian personality, methodological limitations (generalizations based on a non-representative sample; the construct validity⁴ of the F-scale itself; mainly the politically biased F-scale which was also used to describe communists) gave rise to rich criticism (Spielberger, 2004, p.253). As such, through a true dialectic process⁵ of refinement, new methodological approaches evolved, Altemeyer's *right-wing authoritarianism* being one of them.

⁴ Does the construct measure in real life what it claims to be measuring in theory?

⁵ Philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel postulated that ideas evolve through a three stage process: thesis (claim), antithesis (counter-evidence of the truthfulness of the claim) and synthesis (reconciliation and inclusion of new proof to create a new claim).

1.2 Altemeyer and right-wing authoritarianism

“Fear is the destructive energy in man. It withers the mind, it distorts thought and it leads to all kinds of extraordinarily clever and subtle theories, absurd superstitions, dogmas, and beliefs.” (Jiddu Krishnamurti)

Despite attempts to further improve the F-scale there were numerous critics who claimed the insufficiency of Adorno’s approach. They laid the conceptual foundation of today’s studies in authoritarianism. As such, Gordon Allport (1954) forwarded the idea that authoritarians are characterized by ego weakness; they “find it difficult to cope with inner psychological conflict and uncertainty or external social environmental change, uncertainty, and novelty”. At the same time Milton Rokeach (1954) argued that it was the inability of dogmatic people “to deal with new information that [...] predisposes them to authoritarianism” and “causes them to dislike and reject people and out-groups with dissimilar beliefs and values to their own”. Finally, it was the work of Glenn Wilson (1973) that progressed the study of the authoritarian personality by reinforcing the belief that authoritarians, when faced with uncertainty, are more susceptible to experiencing threat or anxiety (Duckitt in Leary and Hoyle, 2009, p.302).

Further developing measurements of authoritarianism, psychologist Robert Altemeyer (1981, 1988, 1996) is first to contest the Berkley studies by moving away from the theoretical underpinnings of Freudian psychodynamics and adopting the analytical framework of Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory (Millon and Lerner, 2003, p.509). His approach hinges on the view that attitudes are a product of personal experiences (attitudinal orientations evolve from adolescence throughout a person’s lifespan) and interactions within social contexts and are determinant of one’s behaviour. To this end, through an inductive process, Altemeyer devises a psychometrically reliable, unidimensional, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) scale. The term

“right-wing” does not point to a particular ideological stance, but rather signifies one’s readiness to accept and prefer the status quo (conservatives). He defined RWA as the covariation of three attitude clusters, reminiscent of Adorno’s influence (Millon and Lerner, 2003, p.509; Whitley and Kite, 2010, p.235): (1) *authoritarian submission* (to the legitimate authorities in a society), (2) *authoritarian aggression* (against individuals or groups as a sanctioned practice by the established authority), and (3) *conventionalism* (understood as adherence to conventions endorsed by the established authorities).

The current 22-items (measured on a 9-point Likert scale) that comprise the RWA scale were selected from a large pool of questions that were the basis of the F-Scale and other measurements of authoritarianism. Through subsequent statistical analyses, a main set of highly inter-correlated items - that could yield a scale balanced against acquiescence⁶ - was selected. Further factor analysis confirmed the unidimensionality of the scale. In addition, the RWA exhibits stability over time with test–retest correlations being 0.85/6 months, 0.75/4 years, 0.62/12 years, and 0.59/18 years. The items themselves are statements meant to capture a respondent’s attitudes and beliefs on a variety of social issues (Duckitt in Leary and Hoyle, 2009, p.304).

Since its inception, the RWA scale has undergone numerous refinements (the latest version was updated in 2006) and subsequent research by Altemeyer (1996) himself and others has confirmed that the scale is reliable and valid (Duriez and Hiel, 2002). Regarding the scale’s validity and improvements over Adorno’s psychodynamic approach, the study of Hiel et al. (2004, p.11) provides compelling results about the impact of authoritarian submission (RWA) and authoritarian dominance (social dominance orientation – SDO is a complementary measurement developed by Felicia Pratto and Jim Sidanius which will be covered later in this paper) on racism

⁶ Is a type of response bias encountered in surveys when respondents tend to passively agree with all the questions presented to them when they are doubtful of the answer or do not want to disclose their true opinions. Therefore, balanced against acquiescence means that certain items are negatively reformulated (reversed) throughout the survey.

and conservative beliefs, while concluding that the results corroborate “a conceptualization of authoritarian submission and authoritarian dominance in terms of enduring beliefs rather than in terms of personality characteristics”.

It has been used as a predictor of racism (Duriez, 2009), sexism (Akrami et al., 2011; Christopher and Wojda, 2008), political conservatism (Cohrs, 2005b; Hiel et al., 2004; Jost et al., 2003, 2007), religious fundamentalism (Altemeyer, 1996; Canetti-Nisim, 2004; Danso et al., 1997) and militarism (Hastings, 2005). The body of research on RWA has shown that this scale correlates strongly with prejudice towards racial and ethnic groups (between 0.3 and 0.5) or other out-groups (between 0.5 and 0.6 with negative attitudes towards homosexuality) and ethnocentrism scales (Millon and Lerner, 2003, p.510). Furthermore, high RWA scores correlated powerfully with fundamentalist religiosity; are cross-culturally indicative of a preference towards traditional gender roles; have been linked to agreement with traditional norms and other measurements of conservatism and traditionalism. Most importantly, beyond its use as a predictor of prejudice in psychological studies, the RWA scale has been operationalized in various political studies as a predictor for right-wing parties support (Leary and Hoyle, 2009, p.306).

Individuals who score high on the RWA scale are more likely to hold rigid beliefs, tend to internalize and dwell more on the threatening aspects of society and when confronted with new information, experiences or views that are different from their value system, their likely reaction is dismissal and avoidance of ambiguity caused by change. As such, it has been observed that their need for closure is higher compared to low scoring authoritarians (Van Hiel, 2004) which explains their readiness to submit to authority and conform to norms; this is a defence mechanism meant to instil in authoritarians feelings of security, (societal) stability and belonging. In other words, authoritarianism is both a distinct way to perceive the world (thus the separation between in-groups and out-groups, us versus them – the non-conformists, aggressors of the status quo, deviants from norms and traditions) and the result of adaptive human cognition processes. “An

authoritarian vision of reality would apply to persons for whom the reality in which they live is hardly understandable and over which they have no cognitive control and who have a need to simplify this reality to get a grip on it” (Van Hiel, 2004, p.825).

Another behavioural trait of people who score higher on the RWA scale is tolerance inconsistency. We can say that there is difference in the way authoritarians relate to perceived out-groups, but one could also frame this as ‘degrees of tolerance’. Because people high in RWA are more often also religious, their self-image is that of morality and righteousness. So, this can explain why some people support the rights of African-Americans while at the same time they resent gay marriage (as this is the legitimate position of most religious figures). The role of authority figures is central in determining whom authoritarians feel more or less tolerant of (Whitley and Kite, 2010, p.237). Still, Altemeyer’s predominant focus on authoritarian submission left room for theoretic and methodological creativity. The dual nature of authoritarian attitudes came to be hypothesised only after the work of Felicia Pratto, Jim Sidanius, Lisa M. Stallworth and Bertram F. Malle on authoritarian dominance was published in 1994.

1.3 Pratto & Sidanius and social dominance orientation

„In obedience there is always fear, and fear darkens the mind.” (Jiddu Krishnamurti)

Whereas Altemeyer's RWA scale was designed to measure authoritarian submission, the construct proposed by Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth and Malle (1994) is meant to measure authoritarian dominance. The social dominance orientation theory (SDO) taps into a different cluster of Adorno's original authoritarian personality characteristics. Taking cue from Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory, Sidanius et al. conceived the SDO scale as means to differentiate between people who view intergroup relations as equal versus hierarchical (Pratto et al., 1994, p. 742). While the items of the RWA scale capture an individual's dispositions to respect and obey authority and conform to traditions, the 16-items on the SDO scale indicate whether an individual is inclined to support social and economic inequality and believes in the appropriateness of the strong to dominate the weak.

Comparative studies have uncovered in subsequent analyses that RWA and SDO, though weakly correlated ($r = .18$, $p < .05$ in Pratto's original study), are measuring two independent yet complementary attitudinal dimensions; RWA and SDO relate to prejudice through "separate motivational pathways" (Duckitt, 2006). Attitudes of high scoring RWAs are mostly influenced by their perception of the world as a threatening and dangerous place, unlike the SDOs who perceive the world as "a ruthlessly competitive jungle in which the strong win and the weak lose" (Leary and Hoyle, 2009, p.310; Duckitt, 2006, p.685) and believe that the ordering of social groups into hierarchies is inevitable and desirable. In contrast, low scoring SDOs are generally tolerant of others and concerned about their welfare and wellbeing.

All in all, as mentioned in the previous section, the RWA scale is theorized to differentiate between varying degrees of prejudicial behaviour as a function of social uncertainty and threat. Therefore, it is within the normative boundaries to infer that fear of certain out-groups (immigrants, Muslims, homosexuals, etc.) will lead to those groups being the target of aggressive and discriminatory behaviour. On the other hand, SDO theory posits that prejudice against out-groups is caused by the need of individuals to maintain the superiority and dominance of the group they self-identify with.

The methodological paces for establishing SDOs reliability and discriminant validity are thoroughly described in Pratto's (1994, p.750-751) original analysis. Across the thirteen different samples of college students that completed the original 14-item SDO questionnaire, the internal reliability (as measured by Cronbach's Alpha) of the scale averaged $\alpha = .83$. The latest 16-items (measured on a 7-point Likert scale) SDO scale has an internal reliability of $\alpha = .91$. Confirmatory factor analysis, using maximum-likelihood estimation, revealed the unidimensionality of the construct. Furthermore, the scale is stable over time; after a period of three months, the test-retest correlation was $r = .81$, $p < .01$ (Pratto et al., 1994, p.747). Evidence supporting the convergent validity of the scale is the following: SDO correlated positively and significantly ($p < .01$) with economic and political conservative attitudes ($r = .38$), as well as anti-black racism ($r = .55$), decreased immigration ($r = .41$), nationalism ($r = .54$), sexism ($r = .47$) and patriotism ($r = .45$); it correlated negatively with attitudes toward affirmative action ($r = -.44$), civil rights ($r = -.59$) and gay rights ($r = -.32$). Finally, it does not correlate substantively with RWA scale or other personality measures. So how are all the things discussed so far relevant for our thesis?

1.4 Connecting the dots

“The following of authority is the denial of intelligence and in the process, self-knowledge and freedom are abandoned.” (Jiddu Krishnamurti)

The social dominance theory has generated a substantial number of studies in the field of political psychology, the SDO and RWA scales being the single most used psychometric tools for predicting support for right- versus left-wing political parties, generalized prejudice, chauvinistic, ethnocentric and nationalist attitudes and politico-economic conservative behaviour. The following articles (their relevance was assessed by the frequency of citations and actuality of research, given the topic of this thesis), discussed in chronological order of their publication, will provide an overarching comparative view of how the predictive power of the two scales compares.

The study of Bo Ekehammar et al. (2004) provides a side by side assessment of the influence of personality, RWA and SDO on generalized prejudice. The authors are among the few to integrate the Big Five personality test (or Five Factor Model – FFM) within a causal model explaining prejudice, while controlling for RWA and SDO. The FFM is a validated, psycholexical, instrument for the psychological study of inter-individual personality differences; it provides a comprehensive description of personality at the level of surface behaviour tendencies (Spielberger, 2004, p.1677). The five personality dimensions covered by the FFM are: extraversion (the extent to which individuals are gregarious, assertive, and sociable versus reserved, timid, and quiet), agreeableness (concerns the degree to which individuals are cooperative, warm, and agreeable versus cold, disagreeable, rude, and antagonistic.), conscientiousness (concerns the degree to which individuals are hardworking, organized, dependable, reliable, and persevering versus lazy, unorganized, and unreliable.), emotional

stability (neuroticism - concerns the degree to which the individual is secure, nonanxious, calm, self-confident, and cool versus insecure, anxious, depressed, and emotional) and intellect (openness to experience defines individuals who are creative, curious, and cultured versus practical with narrow interests.) as described in the Encyclopaedia of Applied Psychology (Spielberger, 2004, p.2193).

Ekehammar's study was to establish the indirect effects of the Big Five factors on prejudice, transmitted through RWA and SDO. On a sample of 183 Swedish college students the authors explored which personality dimensions are causally linked with the scores on the RWA and SDO scales. The response variable, generalized prejudice, was constructed after principal components analysis was performed on scores obtained on four other prejudice measurement scales (racism, sexism, attitudes about homosexuality and mentally disabled people), which loaded on one factor, explaining 57% of total variance.

First, strong and significant correlations were found between generalized prejudice and SDO ($r = .65, p < .001$) and RWA ($r = .58, p < .001$) reinforcing previous findings by Altemeyer and Pratto et al (1994). Second, the correlation table reveals that there was a weak negative correlation between SDO and agreeableness ($r = -.25, p < .001$) whereas all other correlations with the remaining personality dimensions did not achieve statistical significance. Subsequently, RWA correlated with four of the five personality dimensions: neuroticism ($r = .18, p < .05$); openness to experience ($r = .28, p < .001$); extraversion ($r = .15, p < .05$); conscientiousness ($r = .25, p < .001$). Third, statistically significant correlations were obtained between generalized prejudice and neuroticism ($r = .14, p < .05$); openness to experience ($r = .15, p < .05$) and agreeableness ($r = .20, p < .01$). As the authors note, "the more open one is to new experiences and the more agreeable one is, the less prejudiced one tends to be toward various out-groups" (Ekehammar et al., 2004, p.473).

Finally, using structural equation modelling the authors explored the causal influence of personality on RWA and SDO attitudes. The analysis revealed that agreeableness had an influence on prejudice through SDO while extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to experience affected prejudice through RWA. Moreover, “RWA was shown to cause SDO rather than the reverse, and this unidirectional causation was the same when using Generalized Prejudice or the four specific prejudices as outcome variables” (Ekehammar et al., 2004, p.479). A more recent study by Sam McFarland (2010) also concludes that authoritarianism and social dominance together explain about 55% of the variance of generalized prejudice. Nevertheless, despite all personality dimensions (measured with the 60-items NEO Five-Factor Inventory questionnaire) except extraversion correlate strongly and significantly with generalized prejudice, in a regression type analysis they do not improve the model-fit (p.463)

John Duckitt’s (2006) article is of particular relevance to the topic of this thesis as it explores how threat and perceived competitiveness from out-groups influences RWA and SDO attitudes through a dual-process, cognitive-motivational, mechanism. The author hypothesises that both RWA and SDO represent stable aspects of an individual’s personality that, nevertheless, should manifest more strongly given worsening social situations. An increase in authoritarianism is expected whenever social life becomes more dangerous and threatening. Also, an increase in social dominance is anticipated whenever inequality rises and “competition over power and status” accentuates (p.685). So, Duckitt’s hypotheses are: (1) “persons high in RWA should dislike groups that seem to threaten societal or group security”; (2) “persons high in SDO would dislike and devalue out-groups that aroused their competitiveness over intergroup status or power differentials” (p.686).

The study was conducted on a sample 478 undergraduate students from the Auckland University who had to complete RWA and SDO questionnaires, alongside specific group surveys that measured attitudes about housewives and drug dealers, business leaders and rock stars,

feminists and unemployment beneficiaries and physically disabled people. Respondents had to evaluate on a 9-point scale (1 – definitely not, 9 – definitely yes) how likely these groups were to: (1) “threaten, disrupt, or violate mainstream New Zealand society’s conventional norms, values, and traditions” and (2) to be viewed as “socially disadvantaged, subordinate, low in power, influence, and prestige” (p.687). Thus, two variables were constructed to assess perceived social threat (8-items scale with $\alpha = .67$ to $.90$) and group competitiveness (8-items scale with $\alpha = .75$ to $.89$). A third variable (16-items scale with $\alpha = .84$ to $.92$) evaluates respondents’ attitudes vis-à-vis the out-group (may it be drug dealers, feminists, etc.).

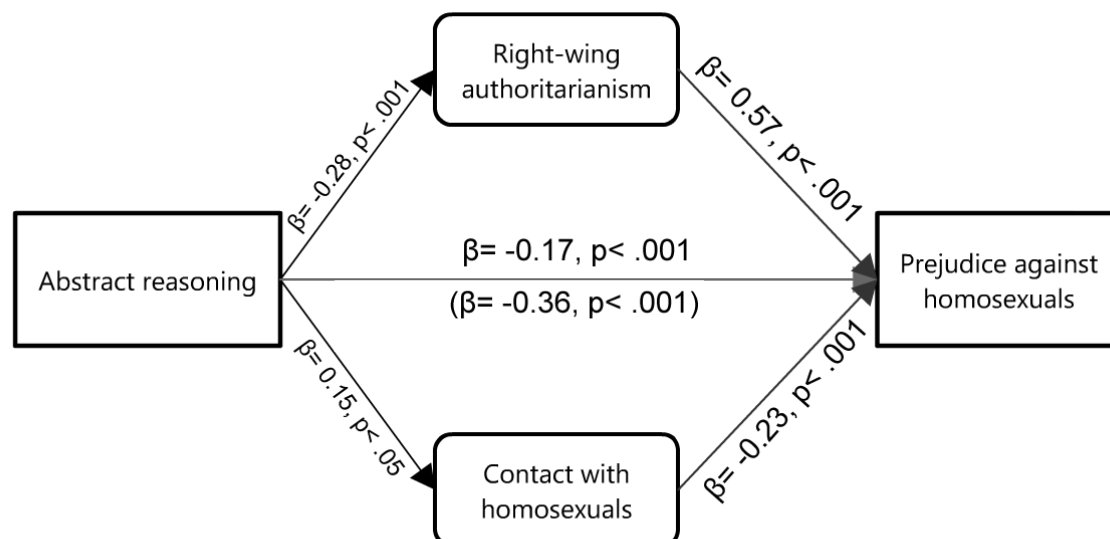
Most importantly, the results of the study reveal that RWA positively and significantly ($p < .01$) correlates across all samples with perceived threat from: drug dealers ($r = .41$); rock stars ($r = .51$); feminists ($r = .36$), while SDO does not. RWA was a strong predictor of negative attitudes towards groups perceived as deviant: drug dealers ($r = -.49$) and rock stars ($r = -.31$). Furthermore, SDO correlated positively and significantly with perceived competitiveness to: housewives ($r = .62$) and unemployment beneficiaries ($r = .43$). Also, SDO predicted negative attitudes towards groups perceived as weak/dependent: housewives ($r = -.47$), unemployment beneficiaries ($r = -.27$) and physically disabled persons ($r = -.35$). Further analyses using structural equation modelling show that attitudes towards out-groups are indirectly affected by RWA and SDO. To the point, attitude formation about drug dealers and rock stars is mediated by the fact that respondents perceive these groups as threatening/disruptive of society’s norms ($r = -.65$ for drug dealers and $r = -.50$ for rock stars at $p < .01$) and not competitive. There is no direct effect of RWA on the evaluations of these out-groups. In a similar fashion, attitudes about housewives, unemployed and physically disabled persons are driven by the respondents’ assessment of these groups as competitive and not threatening. All in all, the results of this study enforce previous findings that RWA and SDO predict prejudice through different motivational mechanisms; “the relationship between RWA and out-group prejudice was mediated by perceived threat from out-groups,

whereas the relationship of SDO to out-group prejudice was mediated through competitiveness over relative status and dominance” (Duckitt, 2006, p.695).

Finally, an alternative explanation for prejudice explores the influence of cognitive abilities (Heaven, Ciarrochi and Leeson, 2011). Previous studies on this topic have concluded that there are negative correlations between intelligence scores and racism (Deary, 2010) and abstract reasoning and discrimination of homosexuals (Keiller, 2010). The research by Hodson and Busseri (2012) analyses data from two longitudinal British studies collected in 1958 (National Child Development Study, 8804 subjects) and 1970 (British Cohort Study, 7070 subjects). They hypothesise that lower cognitive abilities in youth will increase the likelihood of endorsing right-wing ideologies as an adult, which will in turn leads to being more prejudiced against out-groups. Participants’ cognitive abilities were first assessed through standardized tests at the age of 11, respectively 10 years old, while their ideological preferences were reassessed at ages 33 and 30 respectively. Social conservatism was evaluated through items measuring respect and submission to authority and support for conservative gender roles (Hodson and Busseri, 2012, p.189). Alongside socio-demographic data about the parents and the respondents, the studies also collected information on attitudes about racial out-groups.

Employing a mediation model, the path analysis of the NCDS data revealed that for people having lower cognitive abilities as a child will have a weak, but significant effect on the development of conservative ideologies in adulthood; in turn, this strongly predicts generalized racism. Also, the direct effect of intelligence on prejudice is weak, but significant still. The BCS data reveals similar patterns for men whose “conservative ideology fully mediated the negative effect of childhood cognitive ability on adult racism”. Nevertheless, this pattern is only partially reproduced for women who display a stronger direct effect of intelligence on prejudice. (Ibidem, p.190).

Next, using data collected in the USA under experimental conditions (a sample of 251 American undergraduates) the authors expand the previous model by including information about RWA and attitudes regarding homosexuality. They further hypothesised that lower intelligence levels would predict higher levels of anti-homosexual prejudice, less often direct contact with such groups and greater propensity for right-wing authoritarian beliefs. Higher RWA and less frequent social interactions with gay people would positively influence anti-homosexual prejudice. The results (see Figure 1) reinforce the findings from the British samples and confirm the researchers' assumptions.



Standardized path coefficients are shown; the paranthetical value represents the zero order effect.

Figure 1. Mediation model showing the relation between abstract reasoning and antihomosexual prejudice as mediated through right-wing authoritarianism and out-group contact. Adapted from “Bright Minds and Dark Attitudes: Lower Cognitive Ability Predicts Greater Prejudice through Right-Wing Ideology and Low Intergroup Contact” by Hodson and Busseri, 2012, *Psychological Science*, 23, p. 192.

In short, “lower levels of abstract reasoning also predicted greater right-wing authoritarianism, which in turn predicted elevated prejudice against homosexuals” while “individuals who had a greater capacity for abstract reasoning experienced more contact with out-groups, and more contact predicted less prejudice” (Ibidem, p.192). The findings of this study are

relevant because they open a new avenue for research on authoritarianism that could further enrich our knowledge about the roots of prejudice and offer a deeper insight about the motivational mechanisms underlying politico-economic conservative (right-wing) behaviour. As it seems, people's varying intelligence levels offers an alternative explanation for the reasons why some more readily embrace ideologies that promote a hierarchical and authoritarian view of society.

In conclusion, this first chapter presented in broad strokes the main theoretical research avenues for right-wing ideology and conservative behaviour. It focused on the historical development of the concepts, as well as their application in contemporary studies linking personality traits and attitudes with politics and prejudice. The next chapter will focus on identifying the literature gap concerning the effects of economic threat on prejudice and voting behaviour, mediated by right-wing authoritarianism.

Chapter 2: Economic threat and right-wing authoritarianism

Before proceeding to expound how threat triggers the expression of authoritarian behaviour, first I will clarify the conceptual differences between threat, stress, anxiety and fear, from a psychological point of view. Understanding these notions is necessary before explaining the impact the 2008 economic crisis in Europe had on resurgent electoral support for right-wing parties.

2.1 Understanding threat, stress, anxiety and fear

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary threat is “an indication of something impeding” or “an expression of intention to inflict evil, injury or damage”. Threat is the effect of an acting stressor, while “a stressor is a condition or event that challenges or threatens a person”. (Coon and Mitterer, 2007, p.501) When people are faced with the need to adapt and adjust to changes in their social environment (unemployment, divorce, financial decline, etc.) they will experience a physical and mental condition known as stress. Among mental fatigue, apathy and irritability, *anxiety* is one of the emotional signs of an on-going stressful situation. There are also behavioural (avoidance of responsibilities and relationships, self-destructive conduct, poor judgement) and physical (exhaustion, medicine abuse, frequent illnesses) signs associated with stress (Ibidem).

People tend to deal with threat in two stages: first, in the primary appraisal stage, people evaluate and decide if a situation poses any relevant risk to them; in the secondary appraisal stage people evaluate whether they have the means to overcome that situation. People’s ability to cope with threat depends on how a situation is perceived via this dual review process. Feeling

threatened is related to not being in control anymore and thus, people who are faced with uncertainty, feelings of helplessness or inability to achieve their goals will develop the signs of stress. Whenever adversities overwhelm us we naturally feel threatened. As Coon and Mitterer (2007) note, once an event has been deemed threatening there are a couple of strategies one can adopt in order to “get a grip on things”. The emotion-focused coping entails the conscious moderation of our emotional reactions through thought distracting activities such as music listening, walking or talking with friends. The problem-focused coping requires expunging the threat inducing situation altogether.

As I have mentioned, anxiety is the unconscious, bodily manifestation (elevated heart rate and muscle stiffness) of being exposed to imprecise threat inducing stressors. Given that people have varying biological (heritable) and psychological vulnerabilities to anxiety their response to stressful life events triggers might also be different (Barlow and Durand, 2012, p.127). Most importantly, the psychological vulnerabilities are related to the particular views about the world (a dangerous and unpredictable place that one cannot successfully navigate in times of dread) one develops while growing up (either through particular experiences or by lessons instilled by parents). Stressors can activate these vulnerabilities, but the manifestation of anxiety symptoms can endure even after the stressor no longer exists.

Feeling anxious can also be described as being physically tense or feel vulnerable, worried, uneasy or apprehensive about the future. Spielberger (2004, p.716) remarks that “the experience of anxiety appears to be a concomitant of threat-related cognitions when an individual perceives a challenge in the environment that may exceed resources. Small amounts of anxiety have been shown to enhance performance on a challenging task, but profound levels of anxiety have been shown to impair the ability to perform.” It is thought that anxiety is a “future orientated mood state” because it prepares us to better deal with unforeseen upcoming circumstances

(Barlow and Durand, 2012, p.122). Knowing that there is a chance of things going awry makes us want to try and avoid that undesirable outcome.

As such, it may be the case that (1) voters who recognize the threatening nature of becoming unemployed or being unable to pay their financial debts in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis (2) assess that it is out of their control to immediately avoid or remedy the situation and hence, (3) decide to cast their ballot in favour of the political party that promises to alleviate these negative state of affairs. However, as Jonathan Ladd and Gabriel Lenz (2011) remark that in the field of politics, the “evidence that anxiety helps solve the problem of voter competence remains sparse and vulnerable to alternative explanations” (p.348). This finding is relevant because previous research on the role of emotions in political decision making processes claimed that anxious people make more thoughtful and informed political decisions.

Their results support a broader argument of our current study, namely that events that induce high levels of threat and therefore extreme anxiety – the 2008 economic crisis – push (some) voters to support whichever electoral alternatives that promise to lessen the threat. This is in itself the results of an unconscious defence mechanism⁷ (mental process used to elude, reject, or distort sources of anxiety). It may well be that in the case of voters who reorient their electoral preferences in favour of (extreme) right-wing parties, two defence mechanisms predominantly interact: regression (understood as desire to flee an unbearable reality, return to the “paradise lost”) and projection (exaggerating the faults in others and ignore personal shortcomings in order to improve one’s self-image).

As a final point, it should be noted that while fear is also a response to threat it does differ from anxiety. While anxiety is caused by objectless stressors (the feelings of apprehension when walking home on a dark alley), fear is an immediate, short-term, emotional reaction to imminent

⁷ The known defence mechanisms (Coon and Mitterer, 2007, p.510) are: compensation, denial, fantasy, identification, intellectualization, isolation, projection, rationalization, reaction formation, regression, repression and sublimation.

threat and has an object (being robbed at gunpoint on said alley). In other words, fear is distinct from anxiety because of the way risk is assessed, explicitly *potentiality* as opposed to *immediacy* of threat.

2.2 Linking economic threat to right-wing authoritarianism

As detailed in Chapter 1, the literature concerning the conjoint impact of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) on prejudice and intolerance is broad and methodologically diverse. In comparison, the causes that may enable people to express more readily their “authoritarian personality”, have received less attention. Despite the scholarly focus on various threat sources (insecurity⁸, terrorism⁹, war¹⁰, media framing¹¹) as triggers for authoritarian (conservative) behaviour, the particular impact of *economic threat* is earnestly understudied. Having identified this literature gap, I will next proceed to discussing the few and most relevant studies on this topic. Needless to say, the (presumed) anxiety generated in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis in Europe and the recent available data from the 2010 European Social Survey presents us with an opportunity to research the relevance of this particular stressor anew.

Without discarding and acknowledging the pioneering work of Milton Rokeach (1960), Stephen Sales (1973), Doty, Peterson and Winter (1991) and McFarland, Ageyev and Hinton (1995), I will henceforth discuss only the most recent literature about the relationship between threat and authoritarianism. Among the first studies on *Perceived Threat and Authoritarianism* to

⁸ Leonie Huddy, Stanley Feldman and Christopher Weber (2007); John T. Jost et al. (2007);

⁹ Cohrs, Moschner, Maes and Kielmann (2005a, 2005b); Sophia Moskalenko, Clark McCaule and Paul Rozin (2006); George A. Bonanno and John T. Jost (2006);

¹⁰ Sam G. McFarland (2005);

¹¹ Shana Kushner Gadarian (2010);

use individual-level data and distinguish between long-term and short-term threatening societal events, is that of Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner (1997). The authors expand on the original argument of Erich Fromm, who theorized that the need to eliminate uncertainty (the by-product of emerging capitalism and adjustment to a new societal order) is what drives people to embrace authoritarian values.

They hypothesise that there is an indirect effect of threat that activates authoritarian predispositions. They use as discriminant for authoritarian behaviour the attitudes of respondents towards *child-rearing practices*. Subsequently, several other explanatory variables were included: *political threat* measured as “the ideological distance that individuals perceive to exist between themselves and all of the major actors in the political arena”; *economic threat* measured as fear of unemployment, negativity of retrospective personal economic evaluation and negativity of retrospective national economic evaluation; and *fear of nuclear war*. Their response variables are attitudes toward: minority groups; out-groups; preference of order versus freedom; what means to be a true American; support for death penalty, defence spending and war (p.750-752).

The results of the regression analyses are intriguing, but disbelieving given the methodological shortcomings of having to use proxies (values regarding children’s upbringing – insufficiently grounded in theory) in order to determine individual authoritarian levels and running one-tailed t-tests for the interaction coefficients. As such, they find that perceptions of societal threat do not significantly correlate with the measure for authoritarian traits; yet the interaction effects between political threats and authoritarianism were significant. Nevertheless, despite economic threats were found to interact with authoritarianism, “personal economic conditions – whether unemployment or more general personal economic decline – appear to have no aggravating effect”. So, it would seem that threats to personal well-being do not activate authoritarian predispositions, but rather a perceived threatening political environment does. One observation stands, that threat magnifies the effects of authoritarianism (p.765) and that

authoritarians become more punitive and ethnocentric with increasing levels of threat, whereas non-authoritarians did not.

In a following study, Edward Rickert (1998) tested (sample of 131 American college students) if economic threat triggers in authoritarians the willingness to support a reduction of welfare benefits for disadvantaged groups. The study is important as it compares the opinions of non-threatened authoritarians to those who experienced this stressor more strongly. The individual degree of authoritarianism was established by a 22-item F-scale ($\alpha = .78$) and a 50-item C-scale (Wilson's conservatism scale, $\alpha = .87$). The two scales correlated ($r = .42$) but were not used together in subsequent analyses. Economic threat was evaluated via two items that measured how respondents felt about their family's ability to purchase (1) *durable goods* (cars, refrigerators; $SD = 1.18$) and (2) *recreational goods* (vacations, travel expenses; $SD = 1.24$) over the past five years. Successive items captured opinions about the extent of social insecurity and political issues salient at the time of the study. Authoritarians were distinguished from non-authoritarians by a median split ($p = .711$). Those who gave extreme answers to both economic and socio-political items were coded as 1, while the others as 0. A logistic regression model was employed to assess impact of economic threat on welfare related attitudes¹² (1 – in favour of reducing benefits, 0 – neutrality or opposition to such measures).

The analysis uncovered that there was a significant interaction effect between authoritarianism and self-assessed economic hardship. Despite the low variance in the economic items, it seems that authoritarians who have experienced higher levels of economic malaise are six times more likely to support restrictive welfare policies compared to non-threatened

¹² Using these items the response variable was constructed: (1) cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for social security beneficiaries should be abolished; (2) middle or high school students should be provided information about reproductive biology, sexually transmitted disease, AIDS, and condom use; (3) city or county ordinances that discriminate against homosexuals in employment and housing should be overturned; (4) health care to uninsured persons should be funded with taxes; (5) children of illegal immigrants should be expelled from school and denied health care benefits; (6) the state should prevent women from obtaining an abortion; (7) single women with more than two children should be denied additional benefits; and (8) welfare benefits should be terminated after 2 years (Rickert, 1998, p.710)

authoritarians (odds ratio= 6.24, $p < .06$). Furthermore, the same attitudinal pattern was seen when the issue of eliminating abortion rights was analysed separately (odds ratio= 7.85, $p < .02$). So, two thirds of authoritarians who reported having experienced some sort of economic stress reinforced the belief that women should not have the right to an abortion (Rickert, 1998, p.716). Prospectively, this analysis indicates that a worsening economic outlook is likely to intensify the expression of authoritarian attitudes and that, in contrast with the study of Feldman and Stenner (1997), personal financial wellbeing plays an important mediating role.

Further inquiry about the relationship between threat, authoritarianism and voting is provided by Howard Lavine et al. (1999). This study was carried five days before the 1996 American presidential election and examined how varying levels of authoritarianism mediated the persuasiveness of rewarding versus threatening messages regarding electoral participation. Some of the 86 participants (students at the University of Minnesota) randomly received letters that praised the rewards of voting, while others received a letter that underlined the negative consequences of not voting. Their hypothesis is that message type will interact differently according to authoritarianism propensities of respondents. Furthermore, they expected that high authoritarians would find the threatening message more compelling, while low authoritarians would find the threatening message less persuasive and the reward one more relevant. In this study, authoritarianism was measured via a 10-item RWA scale ($\alpha = .70$). The quality of the messages was assessed via a 12-item index ($\alpha = .85$) and this constitutes the dependent variable of the study. Another 16-items ($\alpha = .86$) were used to evaluate the subjects' attitudes towards voting in general.

A between-subject ANOVA on participants' perceptions of message quality confirmed the author's hypotheses (p.343). Indeed, high authoritarians found the threat message ($M = 0.69$) more convincing than the reward message ($M = -0.04$). Also, low authoritarians seemed to like the reward message ($M = 0.63$) more than the threat message ($M = 0.10$). Lastly, high

authoritarians ($M = 0.69$) under the threat condition were more persuaded compared to low authoritarians ($M = 0.10$). Similarly, low authoritarians ($M = 0.63$) under the reward condition were more readily persuaded by the messages than high authoritarians ($M = -0.04$). The mediation hypothesis, tested through a well-fitting structural model ($GFI = .91$, $CFI = 1.00$, $RMSEA = .06$), was also verified. The results indicate that: (1) the interaction between message type and authoritarian traits mediated the respondents' attitudes toward voting in the 1996 elections through the subjective evaluations of message quality; (2) the general attitudes of respondents towards voting had a direct effect on their expressed intentions to actually vote in the 1996 presidential election (p.345). All in all, the main conclusion is that authoritarians are more readily influenced by threat cues. Nevertheless, it is possible that threat cues might actually dissuade low authoritarians from engaging in politics. These findings are important as they could explain the mixed results regarding the influence of the economic crisis on people's authoritarian levels (between 2008 and 2010) presented in Chapter 3.

Another experimental study of threat was carried out by John Duckitt and Kirstin Fisher (2003) who proposed that social threat in particular activates authoritarian attitudes in individuals. They tested this by randomly assigning a sample of 280 undergraduate students to one of the three treatment conditions (scenarios) regarding the future of New Zealand: *secure* – for the next 8 years the country would have gone through an economic boom which lead to minimal unemployment rates and social unrest, *threatening* – in 8 years the country would have experienced economic decline and rising violence and crime rates and *unaltered* (control condition) – the country was similarly prosperous and secure as at the moment of the study. After having read the scripts, the students had to fill-out the 12-item Belief in a Dangerous World ($\alpha = .88$), the 12-item Social Dominance Orientation ($\alpha = .80$) and Altemeyer's shortened 20-item Right-wing Authoritarianism scales ($\alpha = .84$) in order to evaluate their authoritarian inclinations.

The analysis of variance revealed that students exposed to the threatening future scenario had significantly higher dangerous worldview beliefs¹³ ($M= 1.18$) than those in the control group ($M= 0.11$); likewise, those in the secure future scenario had lower dangerous worldview beliefs ($M= -0.79$) compared to those in the control group. Additionally, respondents in the security scenario exhibited significantly reduced authoritarian attitudes ($M= -0.45$) compared to those in the control scenario ($M= -0.28$), while those presented with the threat condition had significantly increased authoritarian attitudes ($M= 0.32$). A final path analysis model ($GFI= .99$, $CFI= 1.0$, $RMSEA= 0.0$) presented bellow (see Figure 2) revealed that threat does not have a direct effects on ideological attitudes and that the effect of threat on RWA will be mediated through dangerous world beliefs (p.211).

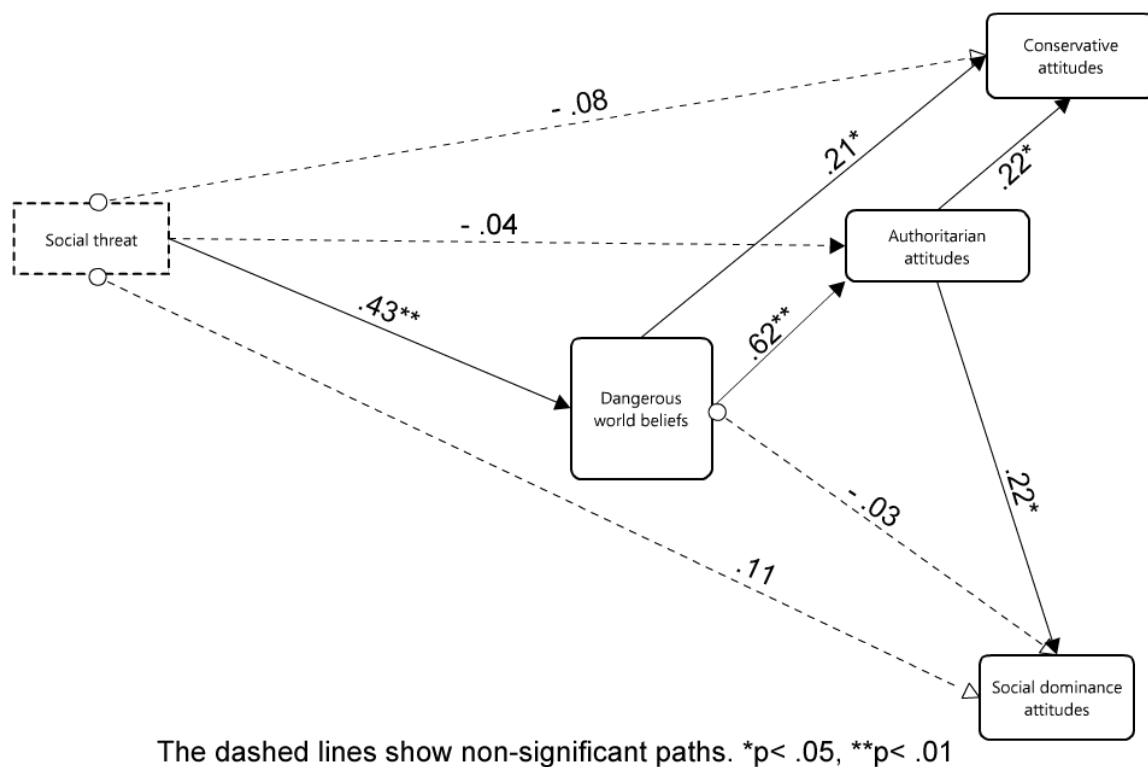


Figure 2. Standardized maximum likelihood coefficients for the LISREL path analysis for the full model for threat, social worldview and ideological attitudes. Adapted from “The Impact of Social Threat on Worldview and Ideological Attitudes” by Duckitt and Fisher, 2003, *Political Psychology*, 24, p. 211.

¹³ For example, students would be more likely to agree with statements such as: “we live in a dangerous society in which good, decent, and moral people's values and way of life are threatened by bad people” (p.206).

The conclusions of this study, and in line with the evidence from previous research, indicate that people who might envision the future as becoming more perilous and uncertain are more likely to be displaying entrenched authoritarian attitudes as an adaptive strategy. These supplementary findings give us hope that the “real life” scenario of the 2008 economic crisis has had a substantial impact on the way Europeans perceive the future of our society, which will bring forth even stronger, actualized, evidence about the influence threat has on political behaviour.

Similar to the research agenda of this thesis (the effects of the economic crisis on individuals’ levels of authoritarianism and voting behaviour) is the study conducted by Mughan, Bean and McAllister (2003) about the role job insecurity has had in the electoral success of the Australian right-wing populist party, *Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party*. In 1998, Australians had a rather dire view about the economic future of their society, 64% believing that unemployment was imminent in the next year and 35% acknowledging that their household income would worsen as well. The working hypothesis, similar with the research goals of Edward Rickert, is that personal economic insecurity is a determining factor in opting to support in elections a right-wing party. The logit analysis confirms this using the data available from the 1998 Australian Election Study. The logit estimates for personal job insecurity (0.71, $p < .001$) and whether the respondent was unemployed (0.99, $p < .05$), were two of the strongest economic predictors of voting in favour of the One Nation Party.

Finally, the recent work by David Butz and Kumar Yogeeswaran (2011) will round off our understanding about the pervasiveness of (macro) economic threat on the development of authoritarian attitudes. In their article the authors explore, by aid of an experimental framework, how varying economic conditions cause prejudice against ethnic out-groups. The conceptual analytic backbone is that people who feel their economic stability threatened by out-groups will

breed hostile and prejudiced attitudes towards said groups. As such, the authors argue that “incidental anxiety stemming from economic threat will increase out-group prejudice” (p.23).

The first study they put forward questions whether anxiety will mediate the relationship between macroeconomic threat and prejudice against Asian Americans. To this end, 111 non-Asian students (28 men and 83 women) were randomly assigned to a control group and one of the two treatment conditions: *economic* – participants had to read an editorial about the economic downturn and future prospects of unemployment in U.S. and *non-economic* – a piece on “the negative effects of global warming for the U.S. including its impact on increased heat waves, wildfires, and storms for Americans in different parts of the country”. The ones in the control group were presented with an editorial “describing a national park in the U.S. including details of its location, geology, and topography” (p.23). After being primed *per se*, the levels of anxiety were measured by four affect descriptors and prejudice against Asian Americans was estimated by a 7-item custom designed questionnaire.

By means of analyses of variance it was uncovered that the threat prime had a statistical significant effect on anxiety scores. Compared to those in the control group ($M = 2.84$), both students in the economic threat group ($M = 4.0$) and in the non-economic ($M = 3.65$) one exhibited higher levels of anxiety. Moreover, being presented with bleak projections about the economic future made respondents to be more prejudiced ($M = 2.73$) in their evaluations about Asian Americans compared to the control group ($M = 2.18$). Nevertheless, the global warming condition did not influence prejudice levels. The mediation effect of anxiety on the relationship between economic threat and prejudice was also confirmed via regression type analyses.

The second study shares the procedural steps of the first one and introduces new measurements for: the effectiveness of the treatments (the extent to which respondents were thinking either about economic threat or global warming); anxiety (feeling tense or calm); affect

(angry, frustrated and bothered); prejudice against African Americans. The same statistical analyses were performed. The goal of this study was to test if “economic threat arouses other emotions (anger), which may play a role in out-group prejudice” (p.24). Not surprisingly, the ANOVA supported the main results of the first study; under the economic threat conditions respondents were more anxious, reported more anger and more negative affect than those in the control group. Also, the threat condition had a significant effect on prejudice toward Asian Americans, but not African Americans confirming the hypothesis that the latter ethnic group is not perceived as a threat to economic wellbeing. Lastly, the mediation analysis did not differentiate between the effects of anxiety and anger as mediators of economic threat on prejudice.

The relevance of this study is in the evidence it provides about the role economic threat has on the evaluations of out-groups and that worsening economic situations will increase out-group prejudice towards those groups that are seen as competitors for resources. Nevertheless, this article does not bring us closer to answering if economic threat also has an impact on people’s decisions to change their political preferences and support right-wing political parties in actual electoral situations. There is additional experimental evidence (Paul R. Nail et al., 2009) that threat can lead liberals to become conservative in their attitudes and that “significant threats always induce a tendency towards conservative social cognition” (p.906) but still, the literature on the mediating role of authoritarianism on the connexion between economic threat and real-life voting behaviour is lacklustre. The two studies in the next chapter will attempt to remedy this situation.

Chapter 3: Analytical framework and results

As mentioned before, the aim of this paper is to assess the (indirect) impact of economic threat on the voting behaviour of citizens from seven Western and Central European countries, as mediated by authoritarian attitudes, between 2008 and 2010. I remind that, in accordance with Altemeyer's theoretical framework, by authoritarian attitudes I understand one's availability to accept and defend the status quo; to prefer security and stability in one's life.

After the 2008 financial crisis, shockwaves have been felt across the world making the present day European sovereign debt crisis the ingravescence of fear and uncertainty regarding the future. Few could argue against the fact that today we are living in a Europe of slowed economic growth, rising unemployment, threatened by the possibility of defaults by national governments (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain) and where a resurgence of far-right national movements has been taking place.

Significant changes happened in Hungary where the right-wing nationalist *Jobbik* has gained tremendous momentum. It increased its electoral support by 14.5% since 2006, gained access into the European Parliament (3 representatives) in 2009 and managed to win 47 seats in the parliamentary elections of 2010. This is not a unique case; similar trends are noticed in The Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Still, in the case of Belgium (*Vlaams Belang* and *Front National*) and Denmark (*Dansk Folkeparti*), right-wing parties rather lost a slight of the popular vote in the last national elections. Comparative electoral results of the 2008 and 2010 national elections are included in Annex 1. These are the only countries that will be included in our analyses (the units of analysis are people from each country sample) because the last wave (2010) of the

European Social Survey (ESS), on which this study is based, did not cover other countries where right-wing parties have significant political support (Austria, France, Germany and Italy) and for which data was available in the 2008 wave.

As each wave of the ESS (alongside standard socio-economic and political items) covers a particular topic (welfare, ageism, etc.) datasets prior to 2008 will not be used because key economic survey items are missing. The data was gathered as close as possible to the national elections periods for the selected countries. Furthermore, I have excluded countries where there is low support for the extreme ideological right because our units of analysis are people and their individual voting decisions. If this were a macro-level study into the formation of right-wing parties, then I would have needed a larger sample of countries. Moreover, I assume that voting for established right-wing parties is not substantively comparable to voting for emergent or fringe, non-parliamentary ones (the Swedish *Sverigedemokraterna* party is mentioned only in the 2010 database). Also, there is a persistent problem of under-reporting in social surveys of the true political preferences of right-wing voters. All in all, including survey data from countries where support for the extreme right is extremely low will most likely dilute and distort any analysis of individual level data.

Although Altemeyer has developed a comprehensive psychometric scale to measure right-wing authoritarianism, given the restrictive nature of the European Social Survey items, I have constructed my own facsimile weighted factor-based individual authoritarian-attitudes scale (henceforth named IAAS), both for 2008 and 2010, using five items¹⁴ from the Schwartz ‘human values’ questionnaire included in each wave of the

¹⁴ Dimension (1): important to do what is told and follow rules; important to behave properly;
 Dimension (2): important that government is strong and ensures safety; important to live in secure and safe surroundings;
 Dimension (3): important to follow traditions and customs;

ESS. The items are coded on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (very much like me) to 6 (not like me at all). Constructing the IAAS was done relating to the core dimensions of Altemeyer's RWA index, while substituting the 'authoritarian aggression' dimension with our own 'need for security' facet. This transgression is in line with the original work of Adorno et al. (1950) and I am of the opinion that 'authoritarian aggression' overlaps conceptually to a great extent with the 'need for social dominance' as described by Pratto and Sidanius. After examining the relevant literature, I rather see aggression against out-groups and welfare chauvinism as an effect of perceived insecurity and threat and not an inherent personality trait. So, I believe this change will reflect more accurately the meaning I wish to convey about what authoritarian attitudes are: (1) *authoritarian submission* (to the legitimate authorities in a society), (2) *need for security and safety* (provided by an authority figure) and (3) *conventionalism* (adherence to conventions endorsed by the established authorities).

The unidimensionality of the scale was confirmed by subsequent factor analyses. For each country sample at both time points, a one factor solution was extracted by means of Principal Component Analysis (which has no distributional assumptions) and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization rotation method. Missing values were excluded listwise. Examining the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures of sampling adequacy (good values should be above 0.8, while the minimum is 0.6) suggests that the samples are intercorrelated and thus factorable, while the statistically significant values for Bartlett's test of sphericity indicate that the relationship among items is strong across all instances (Annex 2). The internal consistency of the used items was determined by the Cronbach's alpha statistic and overall the results are satisfactory (also Annex 2). The question of reliability arises as this index is intended to be used as main explanatory variable in our analyses. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient normally ranges between 0 and 1 and the closer it is to 1 the

greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. It has been accepted that any value above 0.6 is acceptable, while anything below this should be considered problematic.

Being a factor-based weighted scale (de Vaus, 2002, p.250), the raw scores from the five items were first multiplied with their corresponding factor loading values and then summated like this:

$$scale = (variable_1 * factor\ loading) + (variable_2 * factor\ loading) + \dots + (variable_5 * factor\ loading).$$

In order to assure comparability when interpreting the scale's values across years and countries (be able to meaningfully distinguish high from low scores) I applied a further transformation which allowed to set the minimal value to 0 and the maximum one to 10. The lower the scores the more authoritarian attitudes an individual displays. The formula used, as described by de Vaus (2002, p.253) is:

$$newscale = ((oldscale\ value - minimum\ oldscale\ value) / range\ of\ old\ scale) * L$$

where L is the upper limit for the new scale and can take any value the researcher deems fit. The descriptives for the *untransformed* scales are presented in Annex 3 and point that the strongest authoritarian attitudes are found in the Hungarian sample ($M_{2008} = 7.42$, $M_{2010} = 7.46$), in stark contrast with the Swedish one ($M_{2008} = 10.41$; $M_{2010} = 10.46$). Histogram analyses and skewness and kurtosis values alleviate any worries regarding the normality of the variable's distribution and the appropriateness of using it (IAAS) as main response and, alternatively, explanatory variable in subsequent studies.

Study 1: on economic threat

The first of the two studies attempts to compare the hypothesised effects of the economic crisis between 2008 and 2010, using the IAAS as a continuous response variable. Because no items specifically measured people's opinions regarding the impact of the economic crisis on their livelihoods, I assume the mean differences in the explanatory categorical variables have been caused by the ingravescence of anxiety caused by the threat of declining economic conditions. To this end, for each country I have run a series of ANOVAs having as categorical variables the years (2008 and 2010) for which IAAS was calculated and (1) employment status, (2) feelings about household income and (3) feelings towards immigrants. Before proceeding to analyse the results, I have to clarify the main ANOVA assumptions. First, I have established that the response variable is nearly normally distributed across all years and countries and that the size of the groups is almost equal (N of country samples). Second, Levene's statistic (homogeneity of variance) tests that the variance of different groups is similar and I am assured of this whenever it's scores are not significant ($p > .05$, e.g. a value of .695 would be desirable). If this assumption is violated, I can still decide if mean differences between groups are significant by examining the Welch statistic, whose p-levels have to be below .05 (e.g. a value of .02 would be acceptable). Also, Levene's test is excessively sensitive when dealing with large sample sizes, as is the case with this study, and I shouldn't be too concerned whenever high p-levels were obtained. Table 1 summarizes the results of one-way ANOVAs testing the hypotheses:

H₁: the (economic) changes between 2008 and 2010 had no significant impact on people's authoritarian attitudes;

H₂: the IAAS means in 2010 are not lower than those in 2008 (as time passes, the effects of the economic crisis are not cumulative on people's authoritarian attitudes);

Table 1. The one-way ANOVAs results

Country	H ₁	H ₂	Levene's Statistic significance level	Welch (Robust Tests of Equality of Means) significance levels	Between groups significance levels
	Reject hypothesis				
Belgium	yes	yes	0.080	0.000	0.000
Denmark	yes	yes	0.000	0.000	0.000
Finland	no	yes	0.888	0.539	0.539
Hungary	no	yes	0.771	0.069	0.069
Netherlands	yes	no	0.022	0.000	0.000
Norway	yes	no	0.239	0.001	0.001
Sweden	yes	no	0.035	0.000	0.000

Regarding the first hypothesis, evidence (see Table 1 above) indicates that it was successfully rejected for more than 70% of the cases, which means that people's authoritarian attitudes significantly changed between 2008 and 2010 (Annex 4). However, the direction of this change (and its substantive significance) is not consistent across all cases, which leads us to partially fail to reject the second hypothesis. The people of the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden overall became less authoritarian in their attitudes in the same period of time, despite increasing economic malaise as indicated by rising unemployment rates (Annex 5). As the crisis deepened (evidence are the rising unemployment rates across Europe) people did not grow more authoritarian. Some preliminary conclusions I can draw are: (1) it may be the case that people have experienced the threat of economic downturn in ways that do not enforce our view of the positive relationship between economic anxiety and increasing authoritarian attitudes; (2) the effects of the economic anxiety are not cumulative, meaning that in the short 2 years span people adapted to the new socio-economic conditions and coped with the feelings of

uncertainty and insecurity; (3) some countries managed to deal with effects of the economic crisis in more efficient ways than others, alleviating the concerns of their people. In order to derive more substantive findings I have conducted for all countries, excepting Finland and Hungary (for which no significant differences in authoritarian attitudes between 2008 and 2010 were found), three two-way ANOVAs whose statistics are included in Annex 6 and the summarized results in Table 2 below. Next, I will be testing the hypotheses:

H₃: in 2010, compared to 2008, people who are not actively employed will exhibit stronger authoritarian attitudes;

H₄: in 2010, compared to 2008, people who struggle financially will exhibit stronger authoritarian attitudes;

H₅: in 2010, compared to 2008, people who are prejudiced about allowing immigrants outside Europe to settle in their country will exhibit stronger authoritarian attitudes;

Table 2. The two-way ANOVAs findings

Country	H ₃	H ₄	H ₅
	Reject hypothesis		
Belgium	no	no	no
Denmark	no	no	no
Netherlands	yes	yes	yes
Norway	yes	yes	yes
Sweden	yes	yes	yes

In the case of Belgium, all evidence regarding the three hypotheses indicates that the strongest authoritarian attitudes were exhibited in 2010 (Annex 7). Furthermore, the main effect of *employment status* was significant [$F(7, 3409) = 36.450$, $MSE = 97.395$, $p < .000$] and after employing a Tukey's post hoc test, statistically significant differences between the means of retired and paid workers ($p < .000$), education ($p < .000$), those

unemployed ($p < .008$), the permanently sick or disabled individuals ($p < .036$) and people doing housework ($p < .000$) were found. This comes as no surprise when considering that pensioners (and implicitly people over 65 years old who hold dear more traditional views on society) are more exposed to economic fluctuations, as they are dependent on a fixed income guaranteed by the state.

Also, the main effect of *feelings about household income* was significant [$F(3, 3407) = 15.013$, $MSE = 42.477$, $p < .000$] and Tukey's test showed significant differences between those who declare they are living comfortably ($p < .000$) and all three other categories¹⁵. Stronger authoritarian attitudes are justified among those who are at a higher risk of not being able to pay their debts and provide their livelihood. Finally, the main effect of *attitudes towards immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe* was significant as well [$F(3, 3394) = 20.247$, $MSE = 56.706$, $p < .000$] and Tukey's test revealed that means of the response variable are significantly ($p < .000$) different among all four¹⁶ categories of the explanatory variable. This result is coherent with the theorized aggression against out-groups who are perceived as threatening, by virtue of the competition they pose on the job market.

For exploratory and descriptive reasons I have further analysed how authoritarian attitudes cluster given the party preferences. I didn't find significant mean differences among those who declared voting¹⁷ for the right-wing *Vlaams Belang* party on authoritarian attitudes. But I did uncover a significant effect among those who mention which party they are feeling closer to [$F(1, 1470) = 5.332$, $MSE = 15.698$, $p < .021$], the *Vlaams Belang* in particular ($M_{2008} = 4.724$, std. error = .214; $M_{2010} = 3.662$,

¹⁵ (1) Coping on present income; (2) difficult on present income; (3) very difficult on present income;

¹⁶ (1) Allow many to come and live here; (2) allow some; (3) allow a few; (4) allow none.

¹⁷ I have created a new dichotomous variable where 1 means voting for the right-wing *Vlaams Belang* party ($N = 164$) and 0 for all other parties ($N = 2253$) at both time points.

std. error= .324). This shows that in the population, people who would prefer the right-wing party over all other parties have in 2010 stronger authoritarian attitudes than they did in 2008. Looking at Annex 1 we know that in the 2010 national elections the *Vlaams Belang* actually lost about 5% of its voters. And even if our findings were not significant, a trend can be seen: the core supporters of the right-wing party seem to have radicalized from 2008 to 2010. At the same time, it cannot be ignored that this may simply be an artefact of a restructuring electorate; those who did not vote for *Vlaams Belang* in 2010 didn't have strong authoritarian attitudes to begin with (volatile voters). More still, there is potential for growing support in the future, if the radical populist party will be able to fully engage the available pool of strong authoritarians.

With regards to Denmark, the results from our two-way ANOVAs lead us to fail to reject the three hypotheses (Annex 8). The main effect of *employment status* was significant [$F(8, 3031) = 21.519$, $MSE = 67.368$, $p < .000$] and after employing a Tukey's post hoc test I found again statistically significant differences between the means of retired people and paid workers ($p < .000$) and those still in their education ($p < .000$) stage. Also, the main effects of the *year* – $M_{2008} = 4.073$, std. error= .146 and $M_{2010} = 3.49$, std. error= .119 – were significant [$F(1, 3023) = 9.538$, $MSE = 31.412$, $p < .002$] as well as the *feelings about household income* [$F(3, 3023) = 2.622$, $MSE = 8.636$, $p < .049$] despite that Tukey's test did not reveal any significant differences between the categories (nevertheless, the trend was similar to what was witnessed in the case of Belgium). Simple main effect of *attitudes towards immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe* was likewise significant [$F(3, 2984) = 27.502$, $MSE = 88.463$, $p < .000$] and Tukey's test revealed that means of the response variable are meaningfully ($p < .000$) different among all four categories¹⁸ of the explanatory variable. These results are consistent with the case

¹⁸ (1) Allow many to come and live here; (2) allow some; (3) allow a few; (4) allow none.

of Belgium and reveal an increased aggression towards out-groups, as predicted by theory.

Lastly, regarding the vote and preference for the *Dansk Folkeparti* I did not find significant differences between 2008 and 2010 as far as authoritarian attitudes are concerned; both voters and supporter in the Danish population remained constant across time in their authoritarian attitudes. This is reflected by the stable (albeit, the marginally lesser performance in 2010) electoral track record. However, there were significant mean differences ($M_{2008} = 4.104$, std. error = .052; $M_{2010} = 3.63$, std. error = .056) among voters of other parties [$F(1, 2560) = 28.634$, $MSE = 93.009$, $p < .000$] and likely supporters ($M_{2008} = 4.125$, std. error = .056; $M_{2010} = 3.573$, std. error = .061) of other parties [$F(1, 2124) = 27.578$, $MSE = 89.700$, $p < .000$]. These results suggest an increased need for stability and security across members of the Danish population who are politically engaged. This evidence supports Altemeyer's view that (right-wing) authoritarian attitudes are not necessarily the expression of an ideological stance, but rather an adaptation mechanism to threatening social contexts. In particular, Denmark was affected harder (unemployment rose from 3.3% in 2008 to 7.4% in 2010) by the economic recession that swept Europe than was Belgium (unemployment rose from 7.0% in 2008 to 8.3% in 2010).

So what about the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden? For all three cases I have rejected hypotheses 3 to 5, meaning that not evidence to support the claim that people's attitudes became more authoritarian after the economic crisis was found. Consulting Annex 5 we can see that unemployment rates did not increase dramatically between 2008 and 2010 in these countries. True, mean differences across all dependent variables were

significant¹⁹ and in line with the findings from Belgium and Denmark: the retired, people who are coping or having a hard time managing on 'current' income and those who would like to ban the influx of immigrants in their country display the strongest authoritarian attitudes. Concerning people's party preferences, significant results were obtained only for the Netherlands²⁰. People who voted for the *Partij voor de Vrijheid* in 2010 had lower IAAS scores compared to voters of all other parties ($M_{\text{Partij voor de Vrijheid}} = 3.669$, std. error = .134; $M_{\text{others}} = 4.090$, std. error = .050) which is consistent with our general expectations that supporters of radical populist parties are more authoritarian than the general population.

¹⁹ Except the ANOVA with *feelings about household incomes* as categorical variable in the case of Norway ($p = .181$)

²⁰ In the Swedish case I did not have comparable data in the 2008 dataset; in the case of Norway there were no statistically significant differences, either in party vote or party preference on authoritarian attitudes.

Study 2: on authoritarian attitudes

The second of our studies, focuses on: (1) uncovering what factors explain individual's authoritarian attitudes; (2) testing the validity of our individual authoritarian-attitudes scale (IAAS) in predicting prejudice against immigrants; (3) determining what explains the recent increasing support for populist right-wing political parties. To this end I will be performing a series of linear and binary logistic regression type analyses²¹ on the pooled data (N= 11.596) from surveys collected in the 5th wave of the European Social Survey (ESS) from Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

My assumption is that the economic crisis, through its indirect impact on people's perceived job and economic security, is responsible for the shifting electoral trends. Thus the research questions seek to establish the extent to which economic hardships and disenchantment with politics explain the fast growth in electoral support for right-wing parties. The circumstances of the economic crisis and available cross-sectional data on key European countries offer a propitious window of opportunity to test anew whether, as Erich Fromm (1941) coined it, we are witnessing an "escape from freedom" (in Jost and Sidanius, 2004, p.86).

Prior to running the analyses, a series of regression assumptions will have been evaluated. The problem of encountering unreliable measurements that could bias the results of our study is unlikely, given the data source (ESS) and tried data collection methodology. The variables' measurements are appropriate for the type of analyses intended to be performed – continuous, ordinal and dichotomous. Furthermore, I have

²¹ Performed using the trial version of the SPSS 19 statistical package.

already established that the main explanatory variable of interest (IAAS) is normally distributed. The assumptions of no multicollinearity (the low values of the VIF²² statistic, around 1 for all explanatory variables, indicate there is no cause for concern) and homoscedasticity (the variance of errors is similar across all explanatory variables) will be assessed independently for each multiple regression model. Concerning the issue of missing data, all the linear regression analyses have been performed using pairwise deletion. All the variables used in the subsequent regression analyses are presented in Annex 12.

First, I am going to test whether having experienced economic hardship, job insecurity and dissatisfaction with politics helps predict an individual's authoritarian attitudes, as measured by the IAAS. Performing a large-N analysis (N> 10.000) allows the model to be fully specified. The hypotheses state that socio-economic and political factors do not explain the variance in the IAAS.

H₁: having experienced economic hardship does not influence an individual's authoritarian attitudes score;

H₂: disenchantment with politics does not influence an individual's authoritarian attitudes score;

H₃: welfare-chauvinist attitudes and subjective threat caused by immigrants do not influence an individual's authoritarian attitudes score.

²² Variance Inflation Factors

Table 3. Regression model explaining individual authoritarian-attitudes scores

Model 1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Sig.	VIF	95% Confidence Interval for B	95% Confidence Interval for B		
	B	Std. Error					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
	Response variable							
Individual authoritarian-attitudes scores as measured by the IAAS								
(Constant)	4,405	,242	,000		3,931	4,879		
Immigration bad or good for country's economy	,071	,012	,000	1,236	,047	,095		
Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce	,139	,024	,000	1,260	,093	,185		
Placement on left right scale	-,038	,012	,002	1,146	-,062	-,015		
How satisfied with present state of economy in country	,067	,014	,000	1,637	,039	,094		
How satisfied with the national government	-,055	,013	,000	1,497	-,080	-,030		
Gender	-,074	,050	,141	1,074	-,172	,024		
Age of respondent, calculated	-,009	,002	,000	1,095	-,013	-,006		
Years of full-time education completed	,021	,006	,001	1,221	,008	,033		
How religious are you	-,122	,009	,000	1,133	-,139	-,105		
Feeling about household's income nowadays	-,111	,038	,004	1,723	-,186	-,035		
Household's total net income, all sources	,001	,011	,932	1,473	-,020	,022		
Had less security in job, last 3 years	-,163	,064	,011	1,166	-,289	-,038		
To what extent had to manage on lower household income last 3 years	,007	,012	,578	1,346	-,018	,031		
Current job: job is secure	-,022	,027	,423	1,211	-,076	,032		
Doing last 7 days: retired	-,281	,082	,001	1,194	-,442	-,120		
R ²	.151							
F-statistic	55,668 (p< .000), on 15 df							
Durbin-Watson	1.854							

The analysis output tells us that Model 1 is statistically significant (the F-statistic's p-levels) and has good predicting power (Durbin-Watson d= 1.854) explaining about 15% of the variability in the response variable (individual authoritarian-attitudes scale). The low VIF scores indicate that multicollinearity is not an issue (the low standard errors in the independent variables reinforce this conclusion), though homoscedasticity might be according to the graph in Annex 13. Nevertheless, examining the regression coefficient

values and their corresponding significance levels leads to successfully rejecting all three hypotheses. It is safe to say that economic factors played an important role in shaping people's authoritarian attitudes. Feelings about one's household income (one becoming more unhappy with their livelihood) significantly predicted an increase in authoritarian attitudes ($\beta = -.111$, $p < .004$); as well as having less security at the work place in the last 3 years ($\beta = -.163$, $p < .011$). These results are of particular importance as they reveal the substantial impact, albeit indirect, of the economic malaise leading up to 2010. Also, as the analyses of variance showed in the first Study, being retired ($\beta = -.281$, $p < .001$) is a strong predictor of authoritarian attitudes, as those people are most exposed to economic fluctuations (e.g. rise of inflation) because they are dependent on a fixed, usually state guaranteed, income. Furthermore, as one is more satisfied with the economic situation in his country the less authoritarian his attitudes are ($\beta = .067$, $p < .000$). As with most studies on right-wing authoritarianism, religiousness (often associated with traditionalism), education and age are unsurprisingly strong predictors in our model.

Now, regarding the coefficient ($\beta = -.055$, $p < .000$) for the variable measuring satisfaction with the national government, some further explanations are in order. It may appear strange that as one is more content about politics, the more authoritarian he/she becomes. In fact, we have to remember that my index does not portray an ideological stance and rather captures people's needs for stability, security and societal calmness. So, it would be expected to prefer and be content with those that provide the desired way of life. Finally, disagreeing with the welfare-chauvinistic claim that men are more entitled to jobs than women when the marketplace is restrictive ($\beta = .139$, $p < .000$) and with the view that immigrants (outgroup) somehow worsen the economy ($\beta = .071$, $p < .000$) diminishes the IAAS scores. All things considered, it was heartening to discover the substantive

influence economic factors have had on authoritarian attitudes because this could further mediate the relationship with the vote for right-wing parties in the seven European states.

Next, I will be testing the predictive validity of our individual authoritarian-attitudes scale on prejudice against immigrants. The purpose of this analysis is to argue that our individual authoritarian-attitudes scale has similar properties and predictive validity on prejudice as Altemeyer's right-wing authoritarianism scale (RWA) does. It has been well established in the political psychology literature that authoritarian attitudes are consistent predictors of prejudice against fringe groups (homosexuals, blacks, Jews).

Table 4. Regression models explaining prejudice against immigrants

	Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
Response variable	Immigrants make country worse or better place to live							
	Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
IAAS	,124	,000	,105	,000	,111	,000	,097	,000
Placement on left right scale			-,204	,000	-,206	,000	-,188	,000
How religious are you					,030	,032	,040	,004
Men should have more rights to job							,142	,000
How satisfied with present state of economy in country	,104	,000	,096	,000	,095	,000	,070	,000
How satisfied with the national government	,141	,000	,188	,000	,186	,000	,192	,000
Gender	,064	,000	,047	,000	,042	,002	,019	,157
Age of respondent	,032	,016	,026	,048	,023	,091	,022	,097
Years of full-time education completed	,131	,000	,117	,000	,116	,000	,101	,000
Feeling about household's income	-,113	,000	-,104	,000	-,110	,000	-,088	,000
Household's total net income	,051	,001	,073	,000	,075	,000	,064	,000
Had less security in job, last 3 years	,001	,928	,000	,971	,001	,953	,003	,806
Extent had to manage on lower household income last 3 years	,047	,002	,044	,003	,043	,003	,043	,004
R ²	.131		.165		.165		.182	
F-statistic	75,907*** 10 df		88,275*** 11 df		81,281*** 12 df		84,334*** 13 df	
Durbin-Watson	1.843		1.849		1.846		1.873	

*** p< .001

For this purpose, the previous four models helped test the following hypotheses:

H₄: the IAAS can significantly predict prejudice against immigrants;

H₅: the regression coefficient will remain significant across all four models;

H₆: the IAAS is a stronger predictor of prejudice than economic factors are.

The analyses outputs reveal that Model 2 to 5 are all statistically significant (the F-statistic's $p < .000$) and have good predicting power (Durbin-Watson $d_2 = 1.843$, $d_3 = 1.849$, $d_4 = 1.846$, $d_5 = 1.873$) explaining from a minimum of 13% to a maximum of 18% of the variability in the response variable (*immigrants make country worse or better place to live*). Comparable low VIF scores indicate that multicollinearity is not an issue, though the assumption of homoscedasticity persists to be unchecked, as the graphs in Annex 13 show.

We have chosen this particular response variable because it is quintessential in revealing people's underlying prejudicial beliefs. If one is readily to agree, by and large, that immigrants should not be allowed to live in his/hers country then it follows that some individuals are regarded as being better than others, by virtue of their birthplace. A 2-tail Pearson's correlation supports this claim. There is a statistically significant ($p < .000$) negative relationship²³ ($r = -.498$) between people's views whether immigrants despoil their country and how many immigrants from poorer nations outside Europe should be permitted to live in the respondent's country. Similarly, there is a significant ($p < .000$) negative relationship ($r = -.533$) between our response variable and people's opinions

²³ Because the items were reversed for acquiescence; the better the evaluation of immigrants, the more should be allowed to come and live in the respondent's country.

about allowing to live in their country individuals who are racially and ethnically different from the dominant in-group.

The regression analyses results support all the forwarded hypotheses, namely that IAAS is a significant ($p < .000$), strong and consistent predictor of prejudice, even when Model 5 was over-specified. The best results were obtained with Model 2, as indicated by the regression coefficient ($Beta = .124$). I have chosen to report the standardized coefficients²⁴ because they are more informative about which explanatory variables in our multiple regressions have a greater effect on prejudice against immigrants. As such, there is evidence that authoritarian attitudes better explain the variability in the response variable, than economic factors do. This finding is important because the chances of running into the problem of endogeneity when using the same economic factors to explain both variance in authoritarian attitudes (Model 1) and prejudice are decreased. Nevertheless, the subjective perceptions about household income ($Beta_2 = -.113$; $Beta_3 = -.104$; $Beta_4 = -.110$; $Beta_5 = -.088$) and having experienced financial adversity ($Beta_2 = -.047$; $Beta_3 = -.044$; $Beta_4 = -.043$; $Beta_5 = -.043$) in the three years leading up to the moment when the survey was taken (which perfectly overlaps with the debut and ingravescence of the economic crisis) are both very robust predictors of discriminatory attitudes vis-à-vis immigrants.

The supplementary explanatory variables in Models 3 to 5 have been added in an attempt to deflate the effect of our main explanatory variable (IAAS). Unsurprisingly, ideological orientation²⁵ ($Beta_3 = -.204$; $Beta_4 = -.206$; $Beta_5 = -.188$) and religiousness ($Beta_4 = -.030$; $Beta_5 = -.040$) significantly predict anti-immigrant sentiments. Lastly, our

²⁴ They measure how many standard deviations the response variable will change, per one standard deviation increase in the explanatory variables.

²⁵ The more one moves from the right to the left end of the scale, the more positive their views about immigrants become.

expectation that individuals who harbour strong welfarechauvinistic feelings ($\text{Beta}_5 = .142$) will also exhibit very strong anti-immigrant attitude has been met. Though this further collapsed the predictive strength of our IAAS, it did not, however, render it insignificant. The rationale is that if you're going to discriminate against women, you are also most likely to find the competition from out-groups (immigrants) threatening and anxiety inducing. All in all, the main findings of this analysis are that our IAAS is a thorough (and discriminant from economic factors) predictor of prejudice, which further means that the construct we've tapped into is very similar to that of Altemeyer's right-wing authoritarianism. As such, I will continue using IAAS in subsequent analyses to illuminate what are the driving forces behind the favourable vote for right-wing populist parties in 2010.

Then, by employing a multiple logistic regression analysis I'll explore which factors increase the likelihood that individuals will vote for right-wing populist parties. This type of analysis is most appropriate as the dependent variable is dichotomous. For each country sample I have recoded the variable pertaining to the party vote (in the last national election) so that (1) signifies having voted for a right-wing party and (0) all other parties. From a total of 11,596 cases, 3,390 (29.2%) had missing values, 7,435 (64.1%) were votes for 'other' parties and only 771 (6.6%) represented votes for a 'right-wing party'. Individual country based analyses could not be performed because the number of favourable cases was too low (relative to the number of explanatory variables intended for use) and thus, I had to rely on the pooled dataset. Logistic regressions have no particular assumptions about the normality of explanatory variables' distributions, but they should not intercorrelate highly as this can lead to biased estimations.

Table 5. Logistic regression model predicting vote for right-wing parties

Model 6					
Response variable	Vote for right-wing parties (1) as opposed to others (0)				
	B	S.E	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
(Constant)	-1,797	,713	6,346	,012	,166
IAAS	,019	,035	,305	,581	1,019
Immigrants make country worse or better place to live	-,356	,031	134,785	,000	,701
Placement on left right scale	,300	,031	93,369	,000	1,349
How satisfied with present state of economy in country	-,056	,029	3,699	,054	,945
Gender (1)	,547	,123	19,663	,000	1,729
Age of respondent, calculated	-,017	,005	10,651	,001	,983
Years of full-time education completed	-,138	,017	67,018	,000	,871
Income source (<i>wages</i>)			10,984	,012	
Income source (<i>pensions</i>)	,708	,218	10,565	,001	2,031
Income source (unemployment benefits)	,892	,450	3,930	,047	2,441
Income source (others)	-498,282	2,41E108	,000	1,000	,000
Feeling about household's income (<i>living comfortably</i>)			5,566	,135	
Feeling about household's income (coping)	1,233	,553	4,975	,026	3,432
Feeling about household's income (difficult)	1,259	,541	5,419	,020	3,523
Feeling about household's income (very difficult)	1,096	,555	3,904	,048	2,993
Extent had to manage on lower household income last 3 years	,017	,031	,319	,572	1,018
Had less security in job, last 3 years	,226	,143	2,500	,114	1,254
N (analysis)	4251				
-2 Log likelihood	2074,961				
Cox & Snell R Square	.108				
Nagelkerke R Square	.238				
Hosmer and Lemeshow Test	$\chi^2 = 4.680$, df= 8, p= .791				

In line with the overall research question of this thesis, I will test the following hypotheses:

H₇: the individual authoritarian-attitudes scale does not significantly predict vote choice for right-wing parties;

H₈: having experienced economic hardship does not significantly predict choice for right-wing parties.

Besides the above results, SPSS outputs information about the model that contains no explanatory variables (Block 0) which predicts that 91.1% of the time people will choose to vote for other parties than right-wing ones (out of 4251 individuals included in the analysis, only 380 of them voted right-wing in the last national elections). Subsequently, Block 1 describes the above model with all the predictors included as being significantly different than the model ($\chi^2 = 485.212$, $df = 15$, $p < .000$) which includes only the constant (intercept). As it is, the fully specified model was able to correctly predict the electoral intentions of 98.1% of those who voted for 'other' parties and 10% of those who voted for right-wing ones, with a success rate of 91.2% (which is a poor improvement over the constant model). Although, for logistic regressions 'the percentage of variability in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables' cannot be estimated, there is a reliable measurement – Nagelkerke R^2 which approximates the meaning of the R-squared statistic from a linear regression. So, I can state that 23.8% of the variation in our response variable is explained by the employed logistic model (a rather good result). Furthermore, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test provides an assessment of the overall model fit, which for p-levels greater than .05 (for our model, $p = .791$) signifies that model has a good fit.

In short, I fail to reject both hypotheses because the IAAS ($p = .581$), as well as the ‘extent to which an individual had to manage on lower household incomes’ ($p = .572$) and ‘had less security at the workplace’ ($p = .114$) in the 3 years before the 2010 European Social Survey was taken, did not achieve statistical significance. However, having had less job security in the past came close to this desiderate (we consider the .05 threshold to be rather restrictive for social sciences) which would entail that, at least to some degree, economic threat is responsible for the decision to vote for a right-wing party. Furthermore, the situation did not remedy with the exclusion of the Belgian and Danish (where right-wing parties declined in popularity in the 2010 elections) cases from the pooled dataset and conducting the analysis once more. At this point, and using the current methodology, I could not find relevant evidence of the effects of the economic crisis on right-wing voting behaviour. So what makes people more likely to vote for right-wing parties? The Exp(B) column presents by how much a one unit increase in the explanatory variables influences the odds ratio of the response variable. Values above 1 signify that the odds of the outcome happening raise, while values below that will decrease the odds of the outcome occurring.

Thus, people who are less prejudiced against immigrants have the odds of voting for right-wing parties decreased by 29.9%. Individuals whose ideological positioning is by one point closer to the right end spectrum have the odds of voting increased by 34.9%. For every unit increase in satisfaction with the state of the economy, there is 5.5% decrease in the odds of voting with the Jobbik or Vlaams Belang (*sic*). Males are 1.7 times more likely than females to display such voting behaviour. Each one point increase in age is associated with a 1.7% decrease in the odds of voting right-wing. Likewise, one extra year of education leads people to have a 15.8% decreased probability of being members of the Iron Guard. Pensioners, compared to wage earners, are 2 times more

likely to be swayed fear mongering speeches. This finding is in line with the results of our previous analyses that revealed that retired people display the strongest authoritarian attitudes. Similarly, the unemployed or those dependent on benefits are 2.4 times more likely to vote with the True Finns. Lastly, individuals who are coping financially, as compared to those that declare they are living comfortably on their earnings, are 3.4 times more likely to vote for right wing populist parties; the same goes for those who are having a difficult (3.5 times) and very difficult (almost by a factor of 3) time managing on their current incomes. From this it could be argued that people who have a higher chance of experiencing financial difficulties (prospective behaviour) are those most exposed to the siren call of radical discourse.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

The purpose of our studies (among the first of their kind, using large-N cross-country analyses of nationally representative samples of European states within a political psychology framework) is to answer a broad research question about the impact economic threat had (an indirect effect of the 2008 worldwide financial crisis) on the authoritarian attitudes of people from a sample of seven European countries, where in recent years there has been a steady resurgence in support for right-wing political parties (Annex 1). I proposed two observational studies focusing on the individual attitudes of Europeans engaged in complex socio-economic and political contexts. For this, I have utilised the analytical framework proposed by Robert Altemeyer (1981, 1988, 1996) who has developed a unique theoretical concept and measurement of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), while drawing insight from the study of Adorno et al. (1950), specifically for the purpose of better understanding and explaining conservative and prejudicial behaviour.

Though his RWA scale (built from 22-items) is a psychometric measurement that has undergone subsequent stages of refinement over the years, the limitations of using the cross-sectional data available from the European Social Survey (ESS) inspired us to create a weighted factor-based index (individual authoritarian-attitudes scale – IAAS) that would capture the same underlying attitudinal construct as the RWA does. To this end, I have constructed the IAAS keeping close to the original schemata (‘authoritarian submission’ – to the legitimate authorities in a society; ‘need for security and safety’²⁶ – stemming from an authority figure; ‘conventionalism’ – adherence to conventions endorsed by the established authorities) of the RWA scale, while trying to improve its substantive value. Statistical analyses revealed that our new scale is reliable and unidimensional, comparable to the RWA. By authoritarian attitudes I

²⁶ This substituted the original ‘authoritarian aggression’ dimension.

understand one's availability to accept and defend the status quo; to prefer security and stability in one's life. Examination of the literature on political psychology, specifically the works on economic threat and right-wing authoritarianism, I have uncovered that despite the scholarly focus on various threat sources (insecurity²⁷, terrorism²⁸, war²⁹, media framing³⁰) as triggers for authoritarian (conservative) behaviour, the particular impact of *economic threat* is earnestly understudied. Having identified this literature gap, I proceeded to explore the extent of the impact the economic crisis has had on people's authoritarian attitudes and their electoral behaviour.

In Study 1 I have tested whether (1) there were significant changes in peoples' authoritarian attitudes between 2008 and 2010 and if (2) the (indirect assumed) effects of the 2008 economic crisis were cumulative on the authoritarian attitudes of Europeans, in seven countries where there was a strong resurgence and practice of voting for right-wing populist parties, as witnessed by the most recent (2010) electoral records. The evidence provided through analyses of variance indicated that in 5 out of 7 seven countries (Belgium, Denmark, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden), at an attitudinal level, people did in fact significantly varied their authoritarian dispositions.

Nevertheless, for only two of them (Belgium and Denmark) I found supporting evidence that there was a cumulative effect of the (assumed) impact of the economic crisis, which was paradoxical given that in these countries the right-wing movements have actually lost supporters in the last round of their national elections. I can only speculate that people coped with their economic anxiety in other ways than voting for right-wing parties. Moreover, Annex 5 reveals that unemployment rates in the Netherlands, Norway or Sweden did not increase dramatically between 2008 and 2010 which still leads us to believe that there is an important, albeit relative,

²⁷ Leonie Huddy, Stanley Feldman and Christopher Weber (2007); John T. Jost et al. (2007);

²⁸ Cohrs, Moschner, Maes and Kielmann (2005a, 2005b); Sophia Moskaleiko, Clark McCaule and Paul Rozin (2006); George A. Bonanno and John T. Jost (2006);

²⁹ Sam G. McFarland (2005);

³⁰ Shana Kushner Gadarian (2010);

effect of economic threat on general authoritarian attitudes. A further avenue of research this observation opens is to find the threshold (unemployment rates or other macro-economic indicators) after which an increase of people's authoritarian attitudes can be detected. Alas, this being an individual level study on a small sample of countries, I cannot pursue this lead.

I proceeded to analyse in depth the two cases, while focusing on four topics: individual's employment status; feelings about their household incomes; attitudes towards immigrants from 'poorer' countries outside Europe; and political preferences. For both the Belgium and Denmark cases, retired people (in contrast to wage earners, the unemployed, students and house-workers) had the strongest authoritarian attitudes. It shouldn't be too surprising that pensioners (and implicitly people over 65 years old³¹ who hold dear more traditional views on society) are more exposed to economic fluctuations (e.g. inflation) , as they are dependent on a fixed income guaranteed by the state. Furthermore, compared to people who declare that their income provides them with a comfortable living those who are at a higher risk of not being able to pay their debts and provide their livelihood have much stronger authoritarian attitudes. Also, when it comes to immigrants strong authoritarians would rather prefer that none or at most, very few, would come and settle within their country. This result is coherent with the theorized increase in (authoritarian) aggression against out-groups who are perceived as threatening, by virtue of the competition they pose on the job market (David Butz and Kumar Yogeeswaran, 2011).

With regards to those who declare to have voted for *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest), I did not find them more authoritarian than supporters of other parties, though I did uncover that those who declare to be feeling closer to said party (over all other parties) had in 2010 stronger authoritarian attitudes than they did in 2008. This leads us to further infer that the core right-wingers have radicalized from 2008 to 2010, though I do not fail to notice that this might be a product of the restructuring electorate; those who did not vote for *Vlaams Belang* in 2010 didn't

³¹ This is the standard pension age.

have strong authoritarian attitudes to begin with (volatile voters) and ‘diluted’ the results in 2008. A tentative conclusion is that there is a potential for growing support for the right-wing movement, an empirical question that can be settled following the 2014 national elections in Belgium. Similar patterns have been observed in the Danish case. Between non-voters and voters of *Dansk Folkeparti* (Danish People's Party) there were no significant mean differences between 2008 and 2010, though sympathisers were on average more authoritarian. Finally, the results from the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden paint a similar picture to what we’ve so far uncovered. Supporters of radical populist parties are more authoritarian than the general population and strong authoritarians usually are struggling financially and would like to minimize the influx of immigrants in their country.

The main conclusion of the first study is that, as Stanley Feldman and Karen Stenner (1997) found, economic threat did not have a strong and long-lasting effect on people’s authoritarian attitudes, from our sample of seven European countries. This outcome also contradicts the results of John Duckitt and Kirstin Fisher (2003) who surmised in their article that people who might envision the future as becoming more perilous and uncertain are more likely to be displaying entrenched authoritarian attitudes as an adaptive strategy. Though the generalizability of the results should be claimed carefully (as I have not analysed most of the other European countries), I believe in the findings’ accuracy.

The second study in this thesis focused on answering three questions using the 2010 ESS pooled sample data for the seven countries: (1) what determines stronger authoritarian attitudes in people; (2) if our IAAS is a stronger predictor prejudice against immigrants than economic factors are; (3) if authoritarian attitudes can help predict voting for right-wing parties. As such, by means of multiple linear regression analysis I have presented a good-fitting model that explained 15% in the variability in our response variable, individual authoritarian attitudes. I have found that, besides socio-demographic controls (age, education, religiousness, but not gender), in 2010

stronger authoritarian attitudes among European citizens were mainly caused by economic distress. Normative evaluations about immigrants' impact on the economy, welfarechauvinistic attitudes towards women, the sense of insufficiency regarding household incomes, having experienced anxiety regarding the safety of one's job (between 2007 and 2010, thus coinciding with the timing of the financial crisis) and being retired (evidence gathered in the first study), all strongly and significantly predict increased levels of authoritarianism. Lack of personal financial wellbeing and stability provides us with a strong case about the negative impact economic threat has had on people's authoritarian attitudes. But could endogeneity³² be a problem?

Aside from testing the validity and robustness of our IAAS in explaining prejudice against an out-group (immigrants), the second set of regression analyses dispelled our concerns regarding endogeneity. Using the same economic indicators as in the previous model, IAAS was the stronger predictor of prejudice, judging by the standardized coefficients' values. Also, I find further evidence that economic anxiety (approximated by the answer people gave regarding their need to have managed on lower incomes in previous years) is significant in predicting prejudice against immigrants, thus resembling the results of David Butz and Kumar Yogeeswaran (2011).

To sum up, the IAAS was not able to significantly improve our logistic regression model in predicting the vote for right-wing parties. Socio-demographic controls and evaluations about one's incomes achieved this task better. Moreover, having less job security (as a result of the troubled financial times) came very close in achieving statistical significance, thus accepting our hypothesis about the impact the last years' economic malaise had on people's voting decisions and also bringing counter-evidence to the study by Mughan, Bean and McAllister (2003). I do not claim to have provided a definite answer on the matter, but considering the appropriateness of the pooled sample (from countries where right-wing politics have witnessed a resurgence in the last

³² The response and explanatory variables in a model are strongly correlated or otherwise there is a causal relationship among the two.

couple of years) I believe the results are noteworthy. Nevertheless, further research is granted. As our model is mostly economic based and relies on people's attitudes, I agree that a multilevel modelling approach on a larger sample of European countries, while controlling for institutional (e.g. macro-economic data, electoral systems, using information from the Comparative Manifestos Project to assess how the programs of right-wing parties changed, etc.) as well as cultural factors (e.g. how heterogeneous a country's population is; how immigrants are regarded) may provide more substantive results.

Annex 1: electoral trends of right-wing populist parties

COUNTRY	PARTIES	IDEOLOGY/AFFILIATION*	NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ELECTION RESULTS (percentages and seats)					
			2005	2006	2007	2009	2010	2011
Belgium	<i>Vlaams Belang</i> (Flemish Interest)	separatism; nationalism; right-wing populism; right-wing extremism			12,0% (17)		7,7% (12)	
Denmark	<i>Dansk Folkeparti</i> (Danish People's Party)	national conservatism; right-wing populism			13,9% (25)			12,3% (22)
Finland	<i>Perussuomalaiset</i> (True Finns)	national conservatism; social conservatism, right-wing populism			4,1% (5)			19,0% (39)
Hungary	<i>Jobbik</i> (Movement for a Better Hungary)	nationalism; right-wing extremism		2,2% (no seats)			16,7% (47)	
Netherlands	<i>Partij voor de Vrijheid</i> (Freedom Party)	right-wing populism; conservative liberalism		5.9% (9)			15,5% (24)	
Norway	<i>Fremskrittspartiet</i> (Progress Party)	conservative liberalism; right-wing populism	22,1% (38)			22,9% (41)		
Sweden	<i>Sverigedemokraterna</i> (Sweden Democrats)	right-wing populism		2,9% (no seats)			5,7% (20)	

* the data was obtained from www.parties-and-elections.eu, last accessed on 20th of May 2012

Annex 2: factor analyses results and loadings used in scale building

2008 dataset	Country	KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Total Variance Explained	Factor loadings					Cronbach's Alpha
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
	Belgium	0.725	1023.69*, df= 10	41.657%	0.549	0.685	0.711	0.591	0.677	0.647
	Denmark	0.751	1061.46*, df= 10	43.870%	0.516	0.728	0.634	0.697	0.713	0.675
	Finland	0.766	1661.65*, df= 10	47.284%	0.605	0.767	0.632	0.728	0.693	0.718
	Hungary	0.704	840.705*, df= 10	41.069%	0.637	0.720	0.692	0.388	0.707	0.628
	Netherlands	0.799	1862.22*, df= 10	51.288%	0.637	0.737	0.743	0.744	0.714	0.761
	Norway	0.769	978.852*, df= 10	44.896%	0.552	0.730	0.663	0.721	0.669	0.690
	Sweden	0.755	929.656*, df= 10	42.807%	0.561	0.702	0.637	0.670	0.691	0.664

*p<0.000

2010 dataset	Country	KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Total Variance Explained	Factor loadings					Cronbach's Alpha
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	
	Belgium	0.757	1234.78*, df= 10	44.828%	0.567	0.718	0.719	0.652	0.679	0.690
	Denmark	0.731	836.929*, df= 10	41.256%	0.532	0.708	0.614	0.642	0.699	0.640
	Finland	0.784	1501.81*, df= 10	48.338%	0.635	0.773	0.640	0.735	0.683	0.731
	Hungary	0.743	983.977*, df= 10	43.397%	0.619	0.754	0.695	0.494	0.700	0.667
	Netherlands	0.762	1523.80*, df= 10	46.904%	0.607	0.760	0.695	0.689	0.664	0.715
	Norway	0.767	1012.78*, df= 10	44.057%	0.598	0.702	0.629	0.700	0.684	0.681
	Sweden	0.731	750.452*, df= 10	40.720%	0.472	0.688	0.613	0.706	0.683	0.629

*p<0.000

Q1 - Important to follow traditions and customs

Q2 - Important to behave properly

Q3 - Important that government is strong and ensures safety

Q4 - Important to do what is told and follow rules

Q5 - Important to live in secure and safe surroundings

Annex 3: descriptives for the *untransformed* individual authoritarian-attitudes scale (IAAS)

2008 dataset	Country	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
	Belgium	1738	13.93	3.21	17.15	8.59	2.411	5.817	0.394	0.127
	Denmark	1540	15.23	3.29	18.52	9.46	2.93	8.599	0.278	-0.314
	Finland	1872	17.12	3.43	20.55	9.43	2.91	8.495	0.344	-0.140
	Hungary	1408	13.95	3.14	17.09	7.42	2.39	5.713	0.562	0.256
	Netherlands	1698	17.88	3.58	21.45	9.98	3.01	9.074	0.351	0.162
	Norway	1356	16.01	3.34	19.35	9.51	2.75	7.584	0.305	-0.123
	Sweden	1528	16.31	3.26	19.57	10.41	2.73	7.502	0.76	-0.386
2010 dataset	Country	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
	Belgium	1690	16.00	3.34	19.33	9.08	2.64	6.980	0.503	0.163
	Denmark	1509	15.97	3.20	19.17	8.94	2.70	7.336	0.304	-0.289
	Finland	1623	17.33	3.47	20.80	9.49	2.93	8.620	0.343	-0.110
	Hungary	1448	14.22	3.26	17.48	7.46	2.45	6.010	0.638	0.454
	Netherlands	1769	15.01	3.42	18.43	9.54	2.68	7.233	0.342	0.069
	Norway	1521	15.16	3.31	18.48	9.49	2.72	7.401	0.317	-0.110
	Sweden	1413	15.81	3.16	18.97	10.46	2.77	7.68	-0.120	-0.485

Annex 4: mean differences of the IAAS in 2008 and 2010

		Belgium		Denmark		Finland		Hungary		Netherlands		Norway		Sweden
2008	N	1738		1540		1872		1408		1698		1356		1528
	Mean	<u>3.8655</u>		<u>4.0552</u>		<u>3.5102</u>		<u>3.0698</u>		<u>3.5799</u>		<u>3.8570</u>		<u>4.3867</u>
	SD	1.731		1.925		1.702		1.713		1.684		1.720		1.679
	Std. Error	0.041		0.049		0.039		0.045		0.040		0.046		0.042
2010	N	1690		1509		1623		1448		1769		1521		1413
	Mean	<u>3.5870</u>		<u>3.5947</u>		<u>3.4747</u>		<u>2.9529</u>		<u>4.079</u>		<u>4.0776</u>		<u>4.6175</u>
	SD	1.651		1.696		1.695		1.723		1.790		1.794		1.753
	Std. Error	0.040		0.043		0.042		0.045		0.042		0.046		0.046

* the arrows indicate whether the country means have the hypothesised downwards direction; in the case of Finland and Hungary the results were statistically insignificant and therefore no substantial direction could be established

Annex 5: unemployment rates in Europe 2000 – 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
EU-27	8.7	8.5	8.9	9.0	9.1	9.0	8.2	7.2	7.1	9.0	9.6
Euro area	8.5	8.1	8.4	8.8	9.0	9.1	8.5	7.6	7.6	9.6	10.1
Belgium	6.9	6.6	7.5	8.2	8.4	8.5	8.3	7.5	7.0	7.9	8.3
Bulgaria	16.4	19.5	18.2	13.7	12.1	10.1	9.0	6.9	5.6	6.8	10.2
Czech Republic	8.7	8.0	7.3	7.8	8.3	7.9	7.2	5.3	4.4	6.7	7.3
Denmark	4.3	4.5	4.6	5.4	5.5	4.8	3.9	3.8	3.3	6.0	7.4
Germany	7.5	7.6	8.4	9.3	9.8	11.2	10.3	8.7	7.5	7.8	7.1
Estonia	13.6	12.6	10.3	10.0	9.7	7.9	5.9	4.7	5.5	13.8	16.9
Ireland	4.2	3.9	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.6	6.3	11.9	13.7
Greece	11.2	10.7	10.3	9.7	10.5	9.9	8.9	8.3	7.7	9.5	12.6
Spain	11.1	10.3	11.1	11.1	10.6	9.2	8.5	8.3	11.3	18.0	20.1
France	9.0	8.3	8.6	9.0	9.3	9.3	9.2	8.4	7.8	9.5	9.7
Italy	10.1	9.1	8.6	8.4	8.0	7.7	6.8	6.1	6.7	7.8	8.4
Cyprus	4.9	3.8	3.6	4.1	4.7	5.3	4.6	4.0	3.6	5.3	6.5
Latvia	13.7	12.9	12.2	10.5	10.4	8.9	6.8	6.0	7.5	17.1	18.7
Lithuania	16.4	16.5	13.5	12.5	11.4	8.3	5.6	4.3	5.8	13.7	17.8
Luxembourg	2.2	1.9	2.6	3.8	5.0	4.6	4.6	4.2	4.9	5.1	4.5
Hungary	6.4	5.7	5.8	5.9	6.1	7.2	7.5	7.4	7.8	10.0	11.2
Malta	6.7	7.6	7.5	7.6	7.4	7.2	7.1	6.4	5.9	7.0	6.8
Netherlands	3.1	2.5	3.1	4.2	5.1	5.3	4.4	3.6	3.1	3.7	4.5
Austria	3.6	3.6	4.2	4.3	4.9	5.2	4.8	4.4	3.8	4.8	4.4
Poland	16.1	18.3	20.0	19.7	19.0	17.8	13.9	9.6	7.1	8.2	9.6
Portugal	4.5	4.6	5.7	7.1	7.5	8.6	8.6	8.9	8.5	10.6	12.0
Romania	7.3	6.8	8.6	7.0	8.1	7.2	7.3	6.4	5.8	6.9	7.3
Slovenia	6.7	6.2	6.3	6.7	6.3	6.5	6.0	4.9	4.4	5.9	7.3
Slovakia	18.8	19.3	18.7	17.6	18.2	16.3	13.4	11.1	9.5	12.0	14.4
Finland	9.8	9.1	9.1	9.0	8.8	8.4	7.7	6.9	6.4	8.2	8.4
Sweden (1)	5.6	5.8	6.0	6.6	7.4	7.7	7.1	6.1	6.2	8.3	8.4
United Kingdom	5.4	5.0	5.1	5.0	4.7	4.8	5.4	5.3	5.6	7.6	7.8
Norway	3.2	3.4	3.7	4.2	4.3	4.5	3.4	2.5	2.5	3.1	3.5
Croatia	:	:	14.8	14.2	13.7	12.7	11.2	9.6	8.4	9.1	11.8
Turkey (2)	:	:	:	:	:	9.2	8.7	8.8	9.7	12.5	10.7
Japan	4.7	5.0	5.4	5.3	4.7	4.4	4.1	3.9	4.0	5.1	5.1
United States	4.0	4.8	5.8	6.0	5.5	5.1	4.6	4.6	5.8	9.3	9.6

(1) Break in series, 2001.

(2) Break in series, 2007.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: une_rt_a)

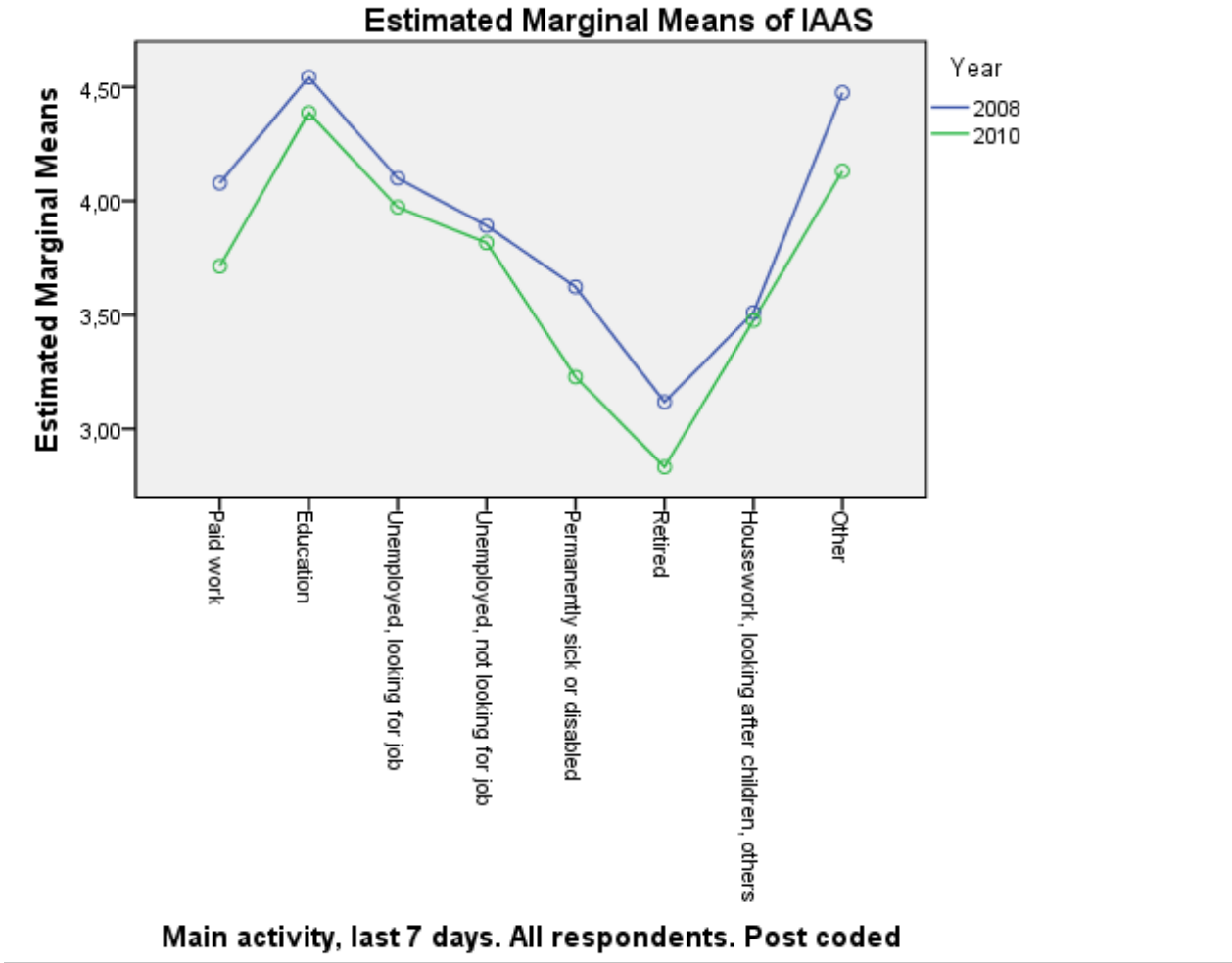
* the data was obtained from http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics, last accessed on 20th of May 2012

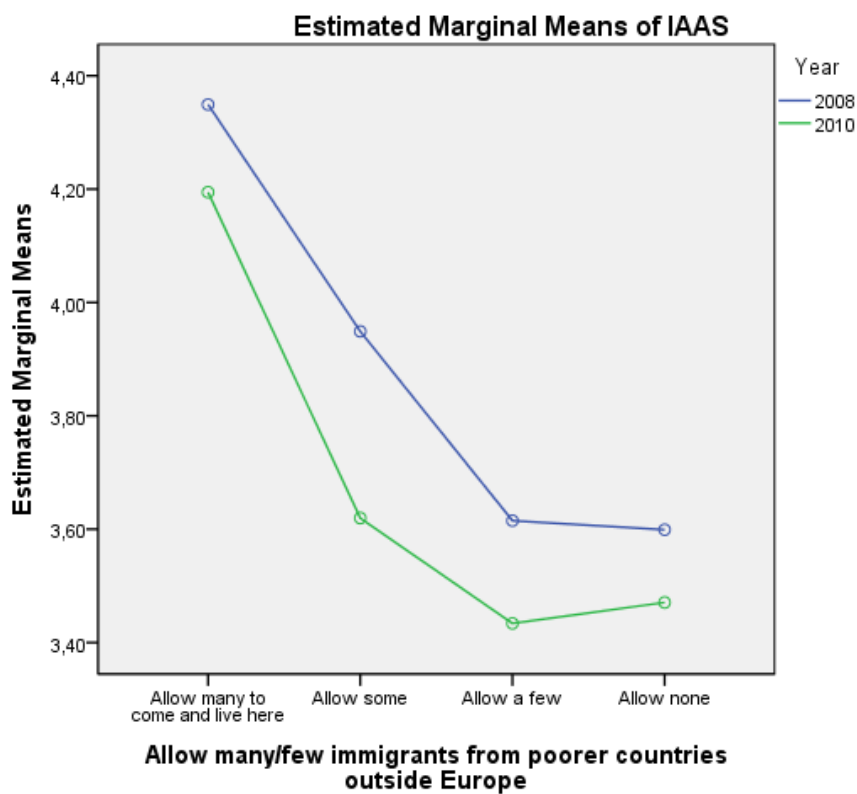
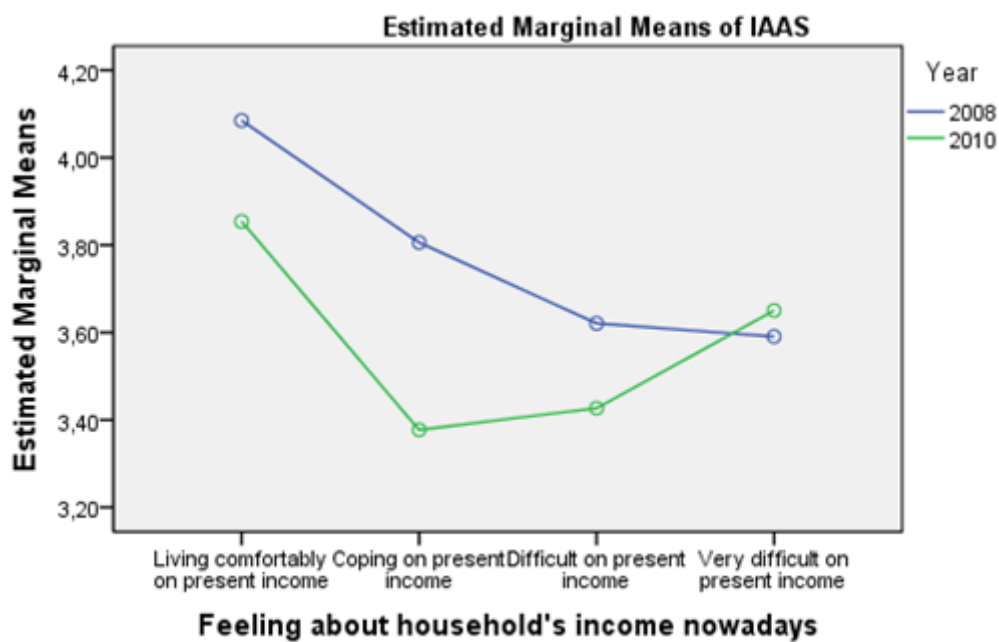
Annex 6: statistics concerning the two-way ANOVA analyses

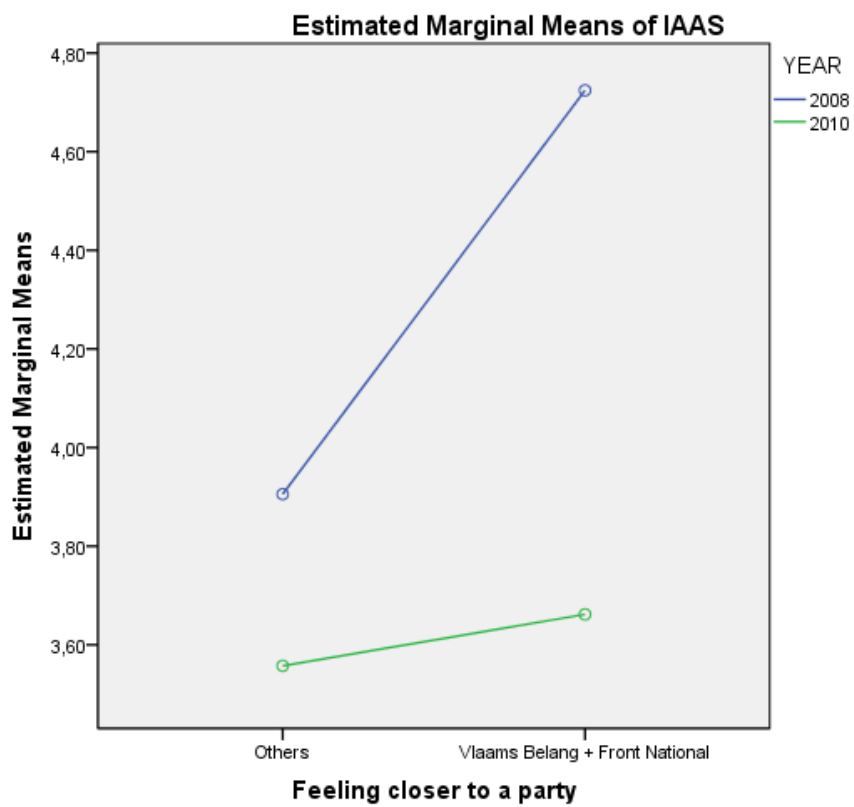
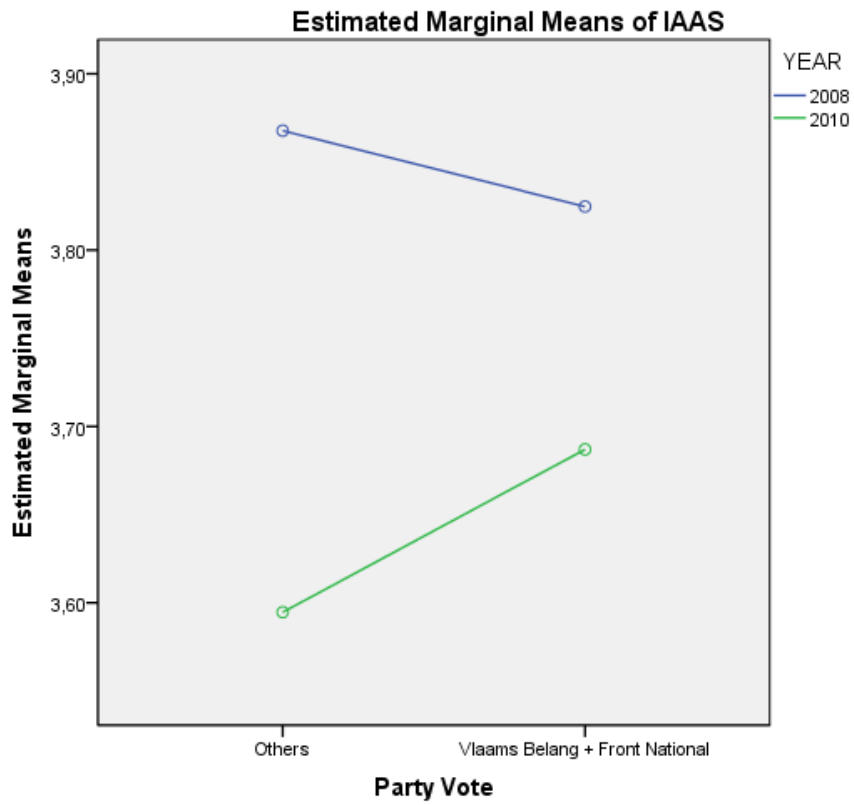
Explanatory variables			N	Levene's Test		
				F	df1	df2
Belgium	Main activity in the last 7 days	3425	1.837	15	3409	.025
	Feeling about household's income nowadays	3415	1.237	7	3407	.278
	Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	3402	3.989	7	3394	.000
	Which party do you feel closer to, dichotomised: <i>Vlaams Belang</i> and others	1474	.710	3	1470	.546
Denmark	Main activity in the last 7 days	3048	2.703	16	3031	.000
	Feeling about household's income nowadays	3031	4.630	7	3023	.000
	Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	2992	4.456	7	2984	.000
	Which party did you vote for in the last elections, dichotomised: <i>Dansk Folkeparti</i> and others	2464	5.955	3	2460	.000
	Which party do you feel closer to, dichotomised: <i>Dansk Folkeparti</i> and others	2128	10.581	3	2124	.000
Netherlands	Main activity in the last 7 days	3454	1.976	15	3438	.014
	Feeling about household's income nowadays	3431	1.679	7	3423	.109
	Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	3400	1.882	7	3392	.068
	Which party did you vote for in the last elections, dichotomised: <i>Partij voor de Vrijheid</i> and others	2697	1.657	3	2693	.174
	Which party do you feel closer to, dichotomised: <i>Partij voor de Vrijheid</i> and others	1994	3.842	3	1990	.009
Norway	Main activity in the last 7 days	2877	1.435	17	2859	.110
	Feeling about household's income nowadays	2876	1.789	7	2868	.085
	Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	2865	3.294	7	2857	.002
Sweden	Main activity in the last 7 days	2938	1.155	15	2922	.300
	Feeling about household's income nowadays	2937	2.571	7	2929	.012
	Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	2906	.720	7	2898	.655

CEU eTD

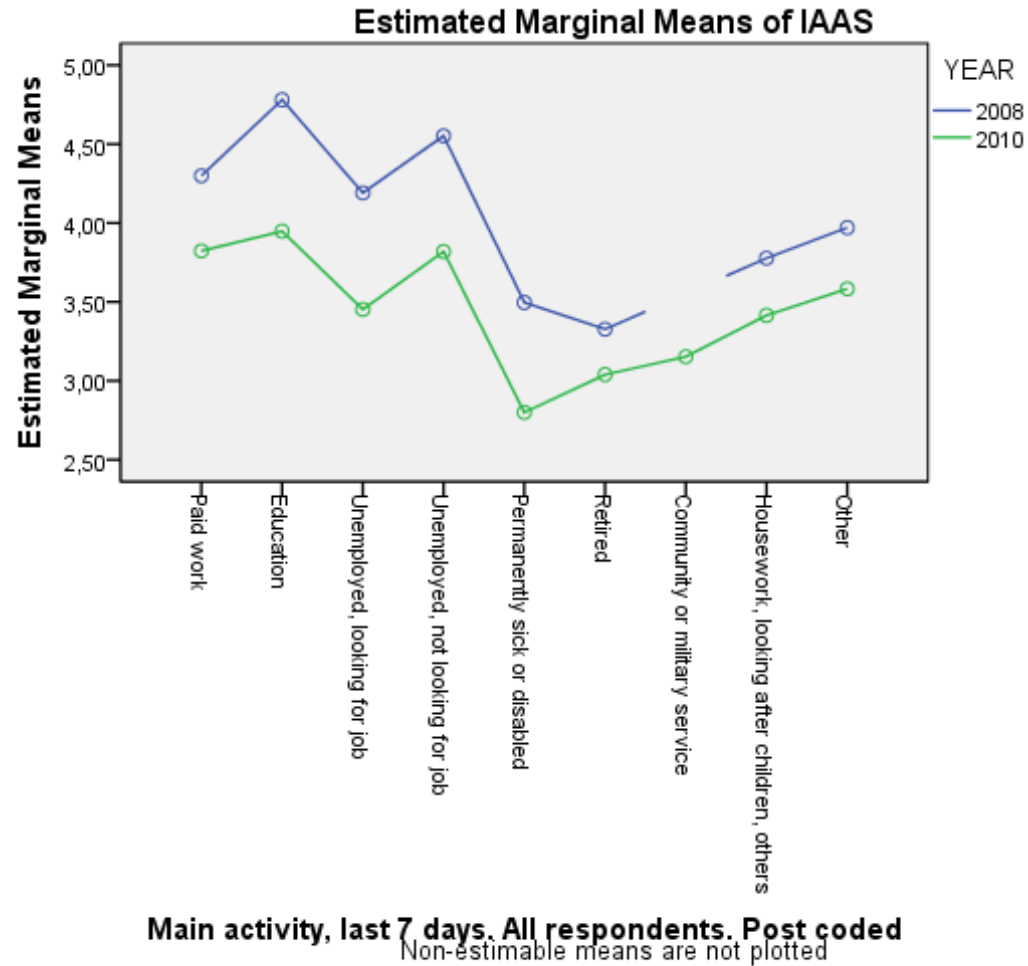
Annex 7: Belgium

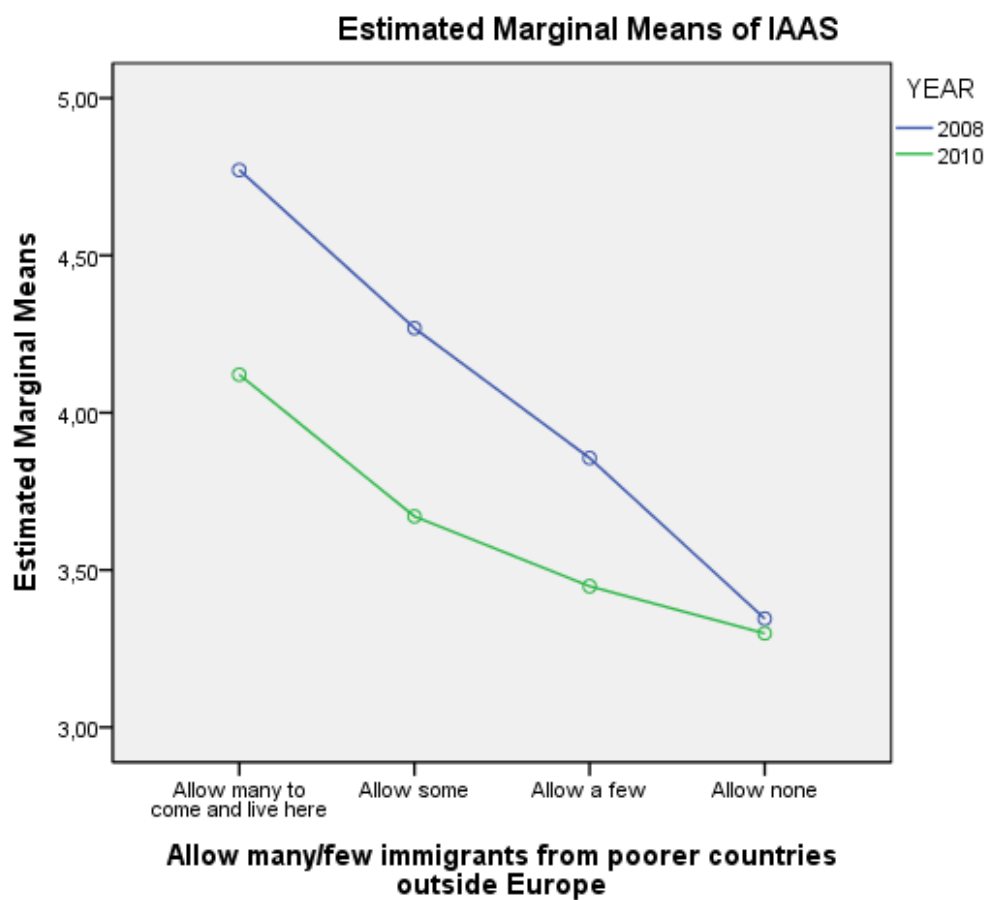
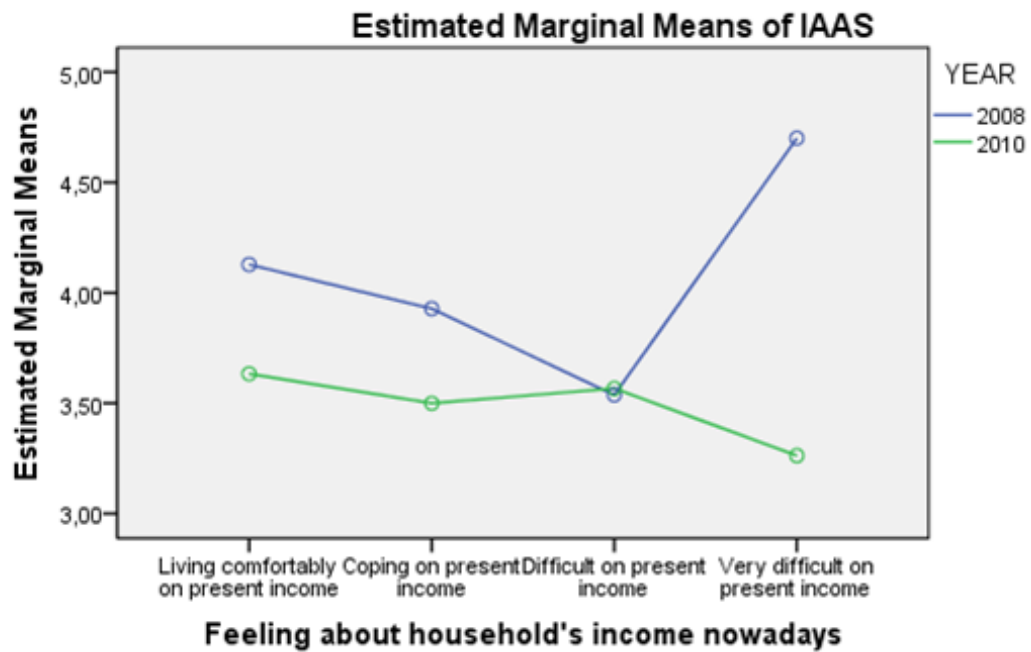


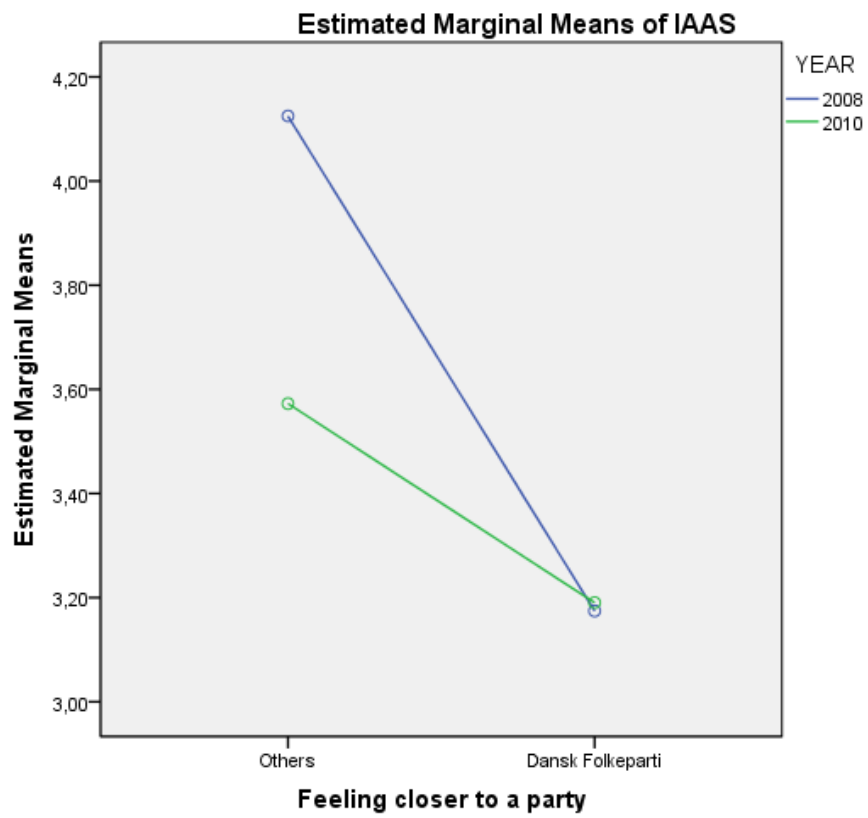
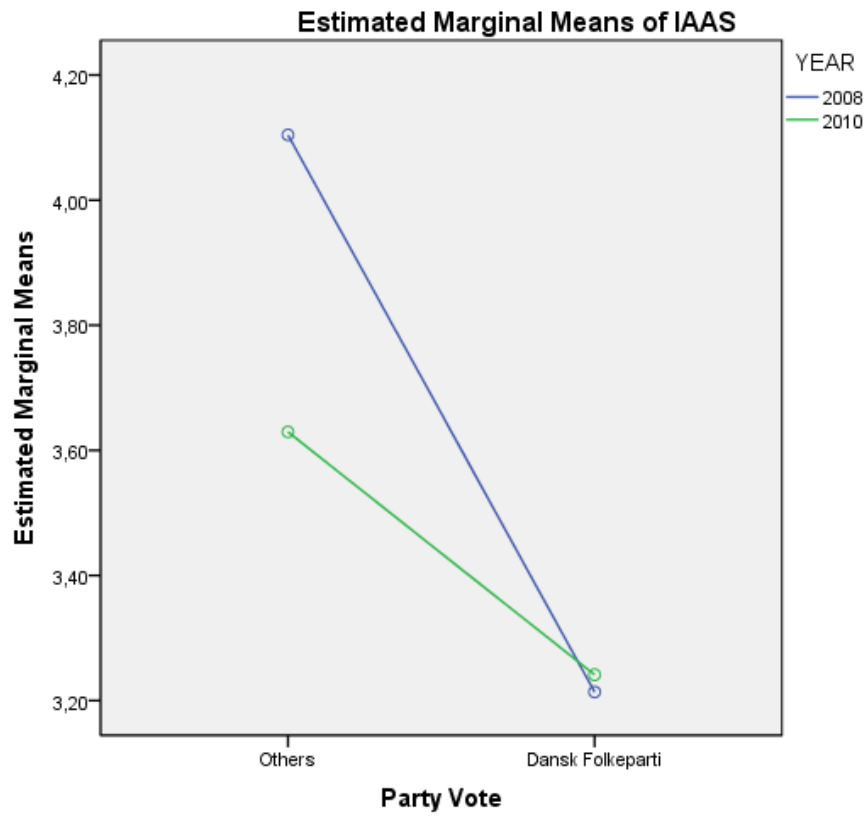




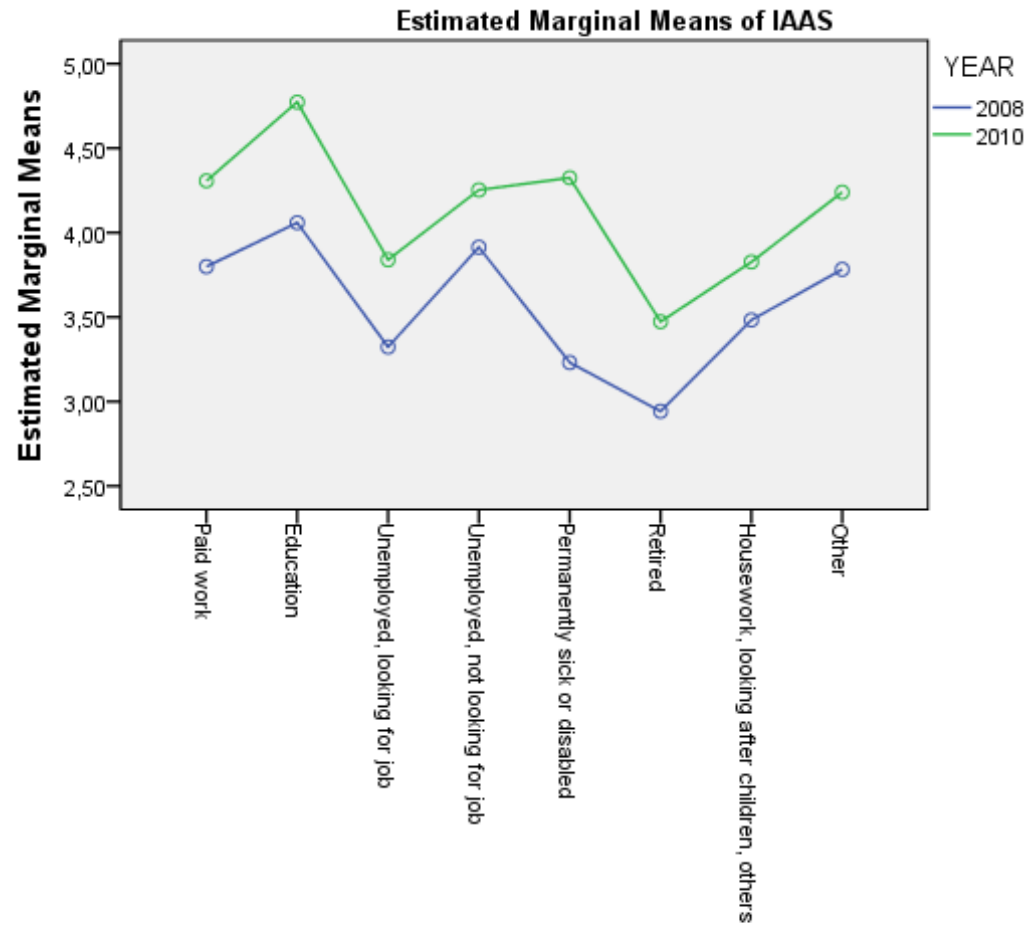
Annex 8: Denmark



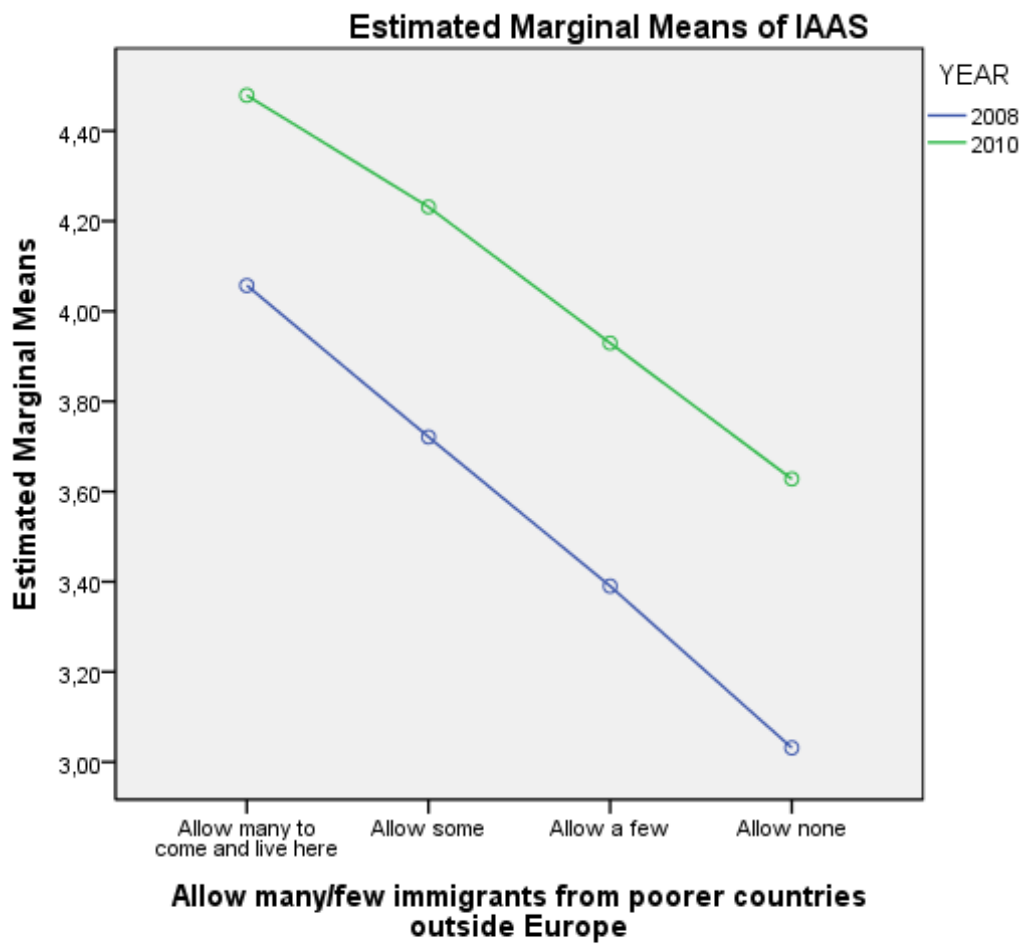
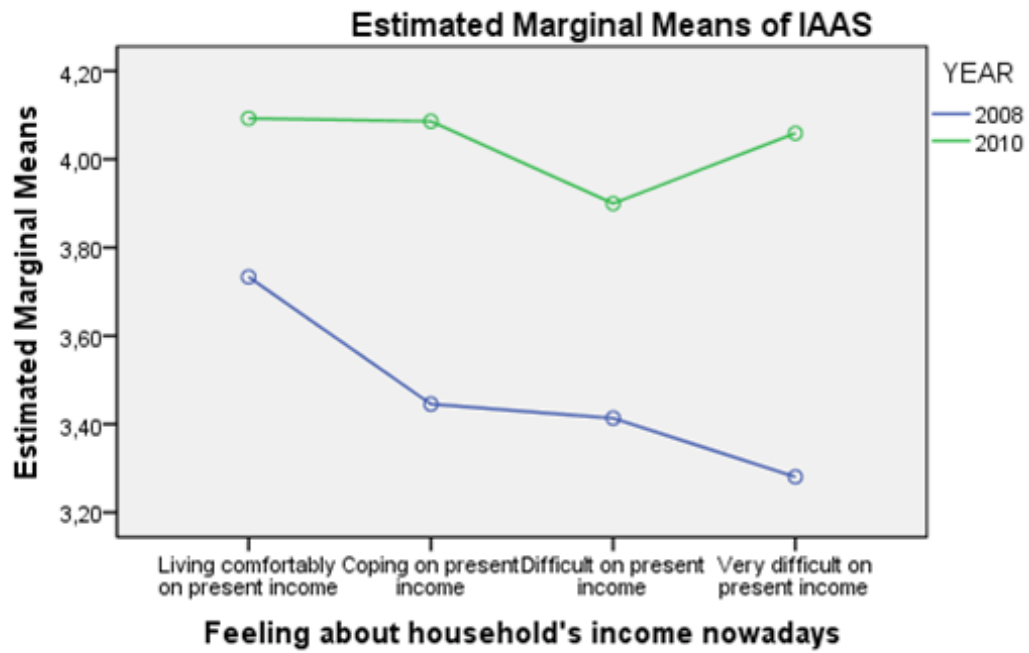


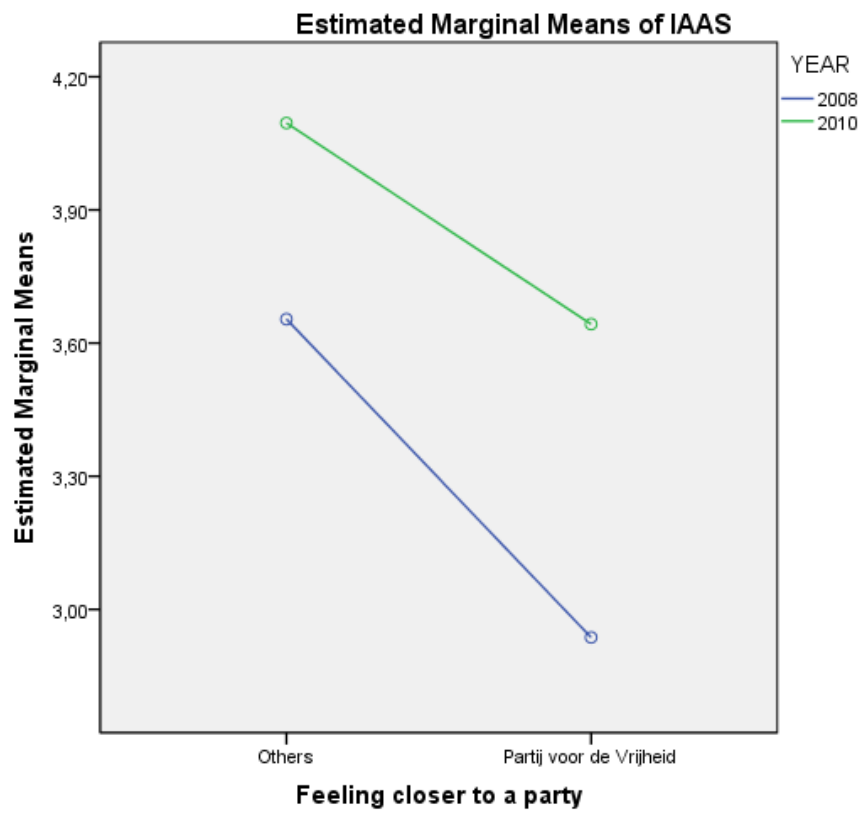
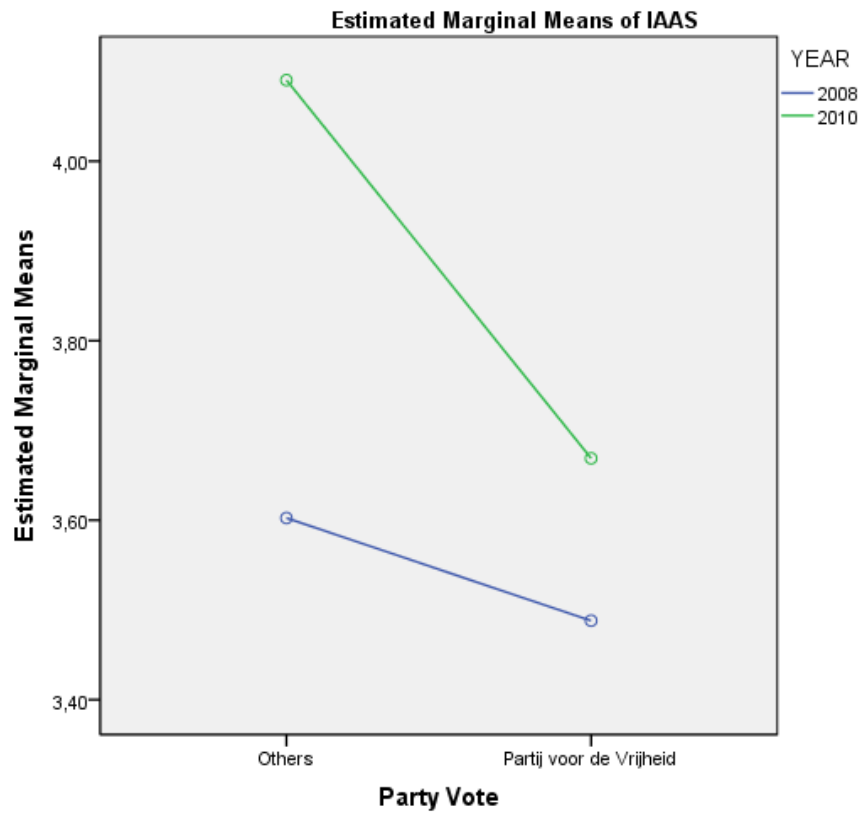


Annex 9: The Netherlands

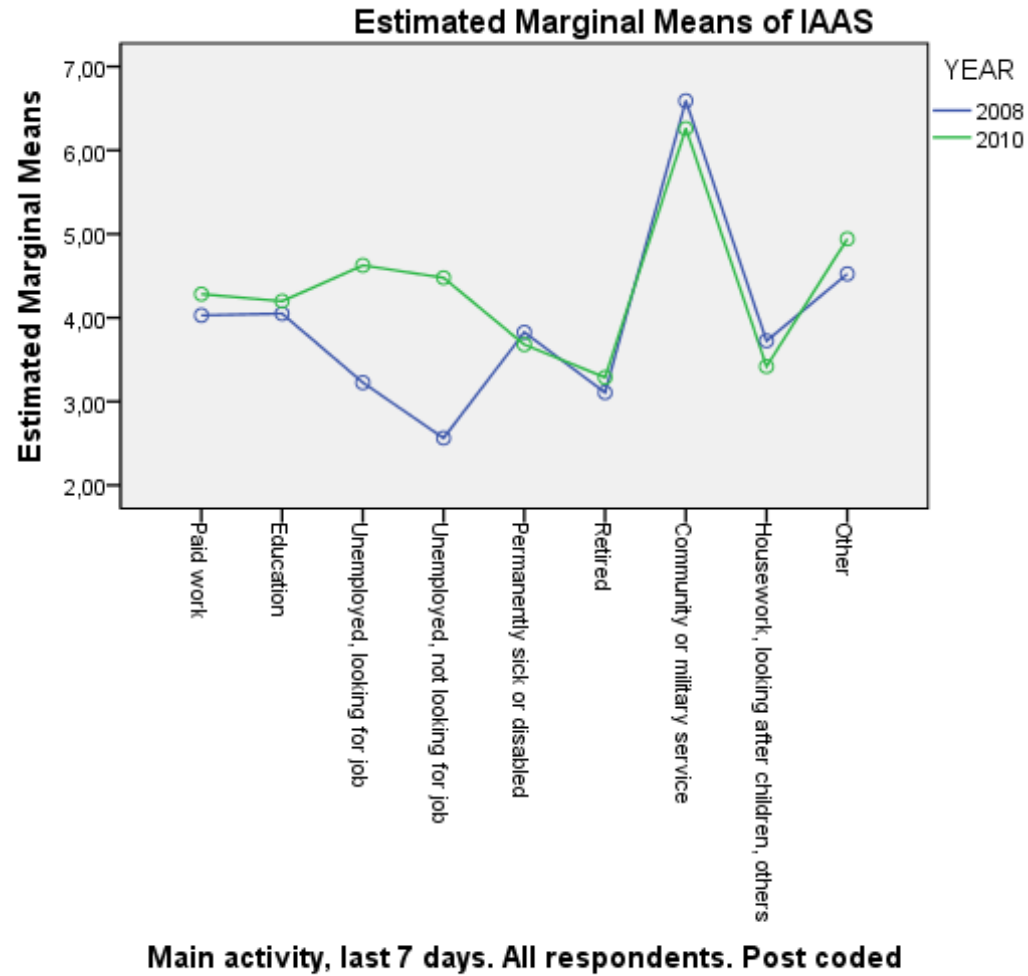


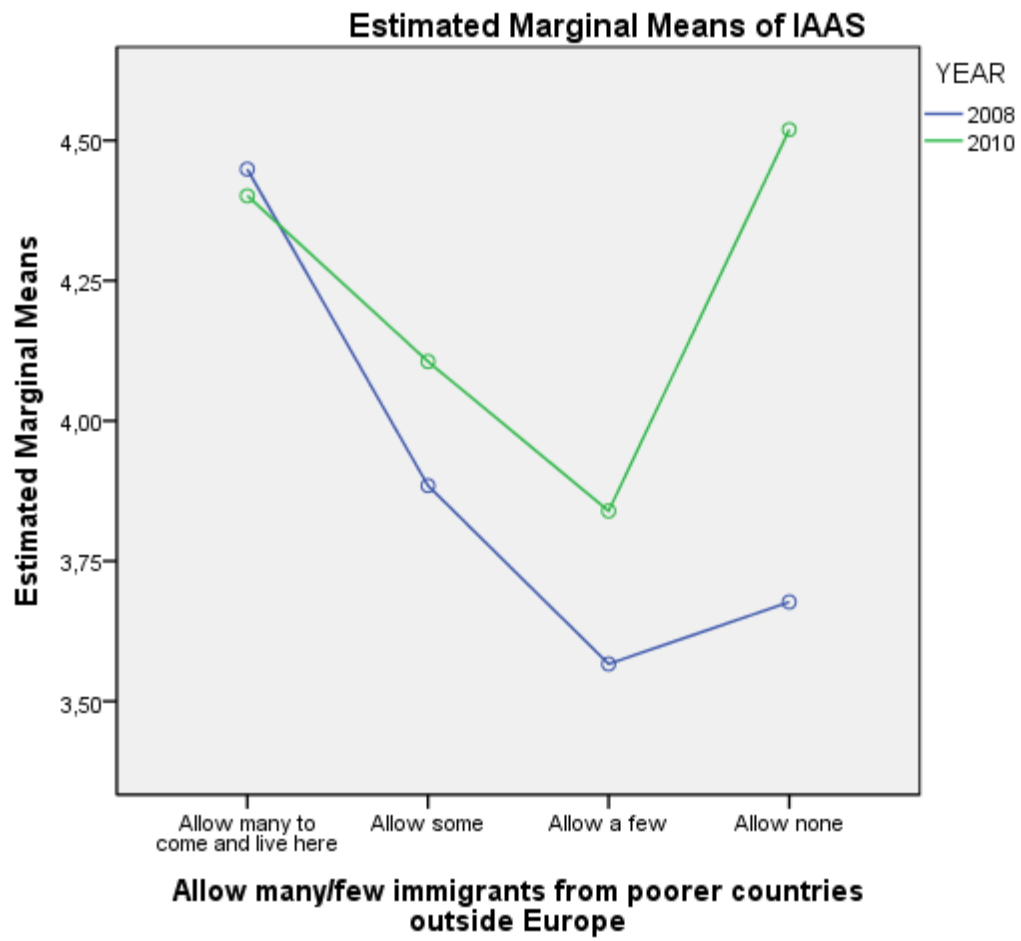
Main activity, last 7 days. All respondents. Post coded



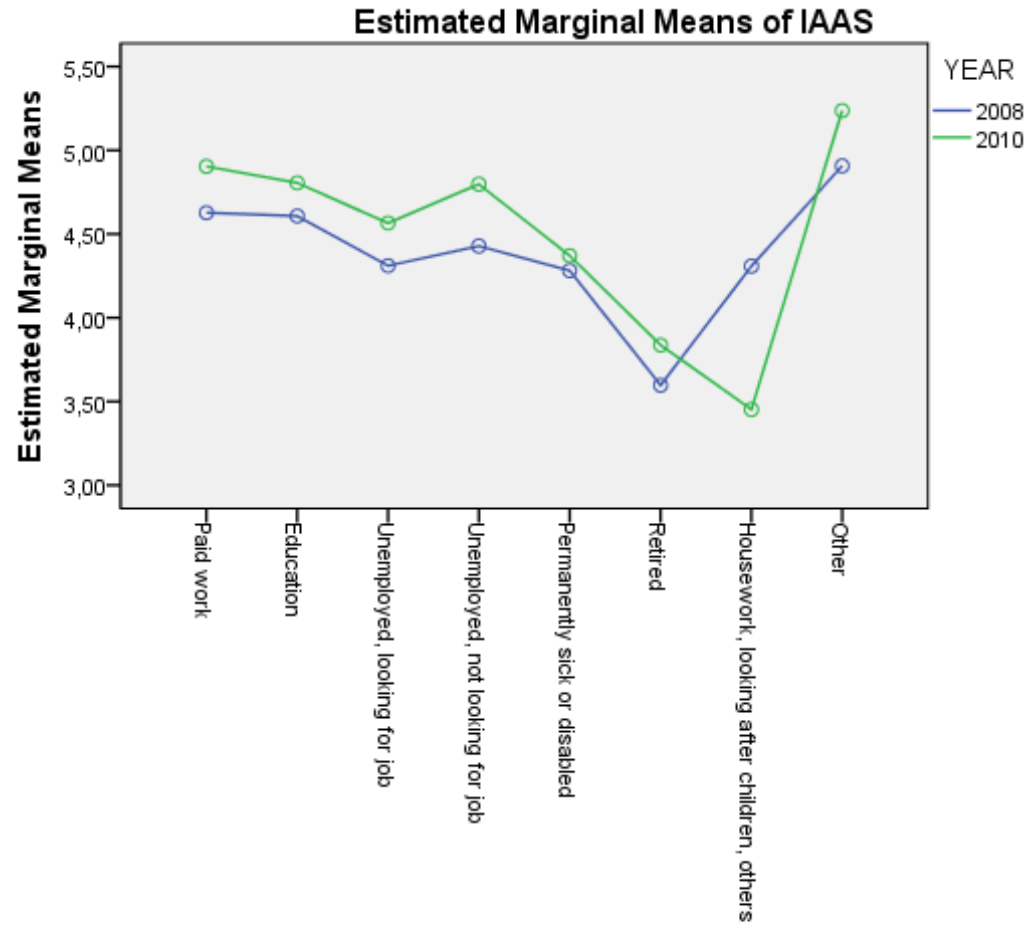


Annex 10: Norway

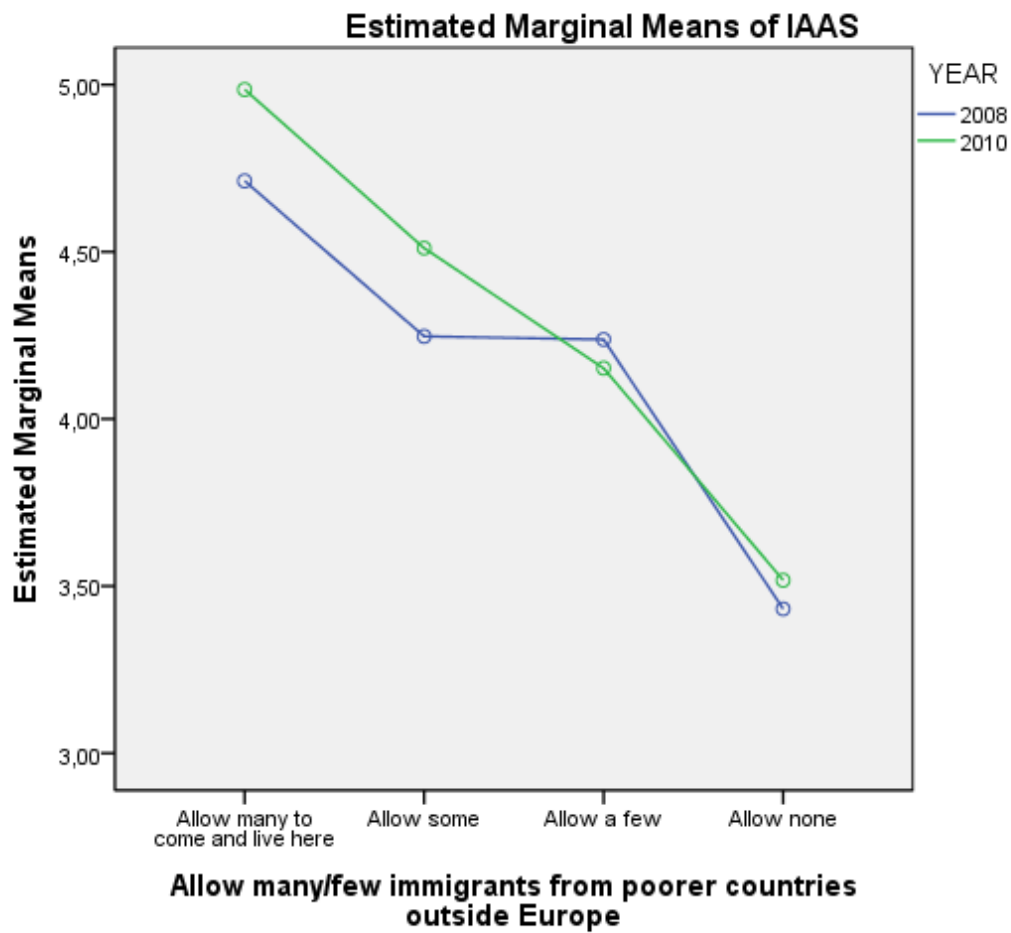
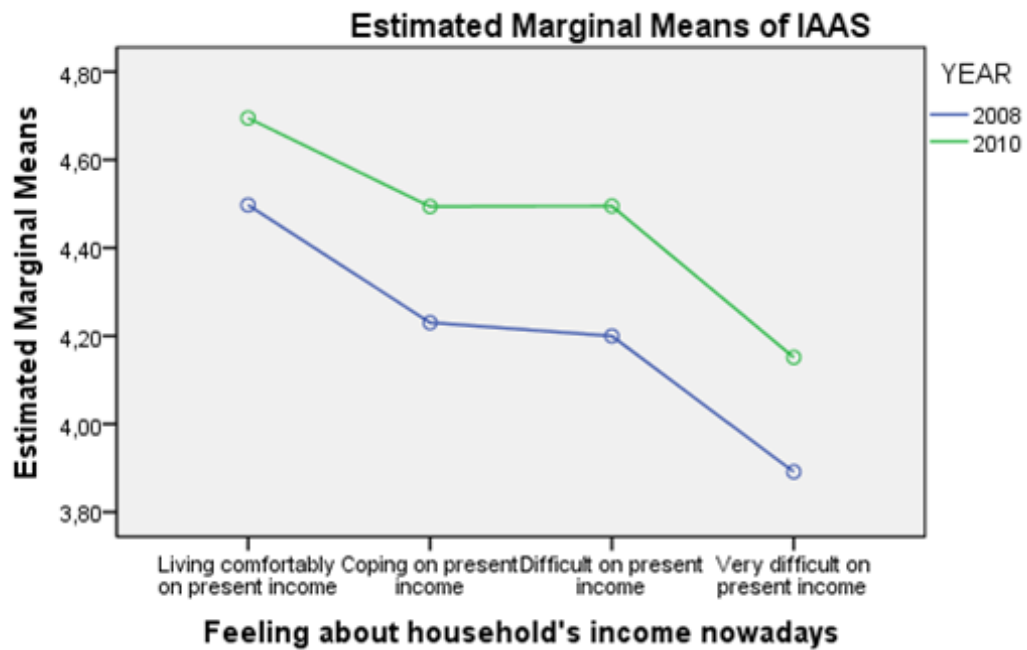




Annex 11: Sweden



Main activity, last 7 days. All respondents. Post coded



Annex 12: description of explanatory variables

Variables	Questions wording	Values and categories
	Now I will briefly describe some people. Please listen to each description and tell me how much each person is or is not like you. Use this card for your answer.	
important to do what is told and follow rules	She/he believes that people should do what they're told. She/he thinks people should follow rules at all times, even when no-one is watching.	1 Very much like me
important to behave properly	It is important to her/him always to behave properly. She/he wants to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong.	2 Like me
important that government is strong and ensures safety	It is important to her/him that the government ensures her/his safety against all threats. She/he wants the state to be strong so it can defend its citizens.	3 Somewhat like me
important to live in secure and safe surroundings	It is important to her/him to live in secure surroundings. She/he avoids anything that might endanger her/his safety.	4 A little like me
important to follow traditions and customs	Tradition is important to her/him. She/he tries to follow the customs handed down by her/his religion or her/his family.	5 Not like me
		6 Not like me at all
		7 Refusal
		8 Don't know
		9 No answer

Variables	Questions wording	Values and categories
Main activity, last 7 days.	And which of these descriptions best describes your situation (in the last seven days)?	01 In paid work (or away temporarily) (employee, self-employed, working for your family business) 02 In education (not paid for by employer), even if on vacation 03 Unemployed and actively looking for a job 04 Unemployed, wanting a job but not actively looking for a job 05 Permanently sick or disabled 06 Retired 07 In community or military service 08 Doing housework, looking after children or other persons 09 Other 66 Not applicable 77 Refusal 88 Don't know 99 No answer

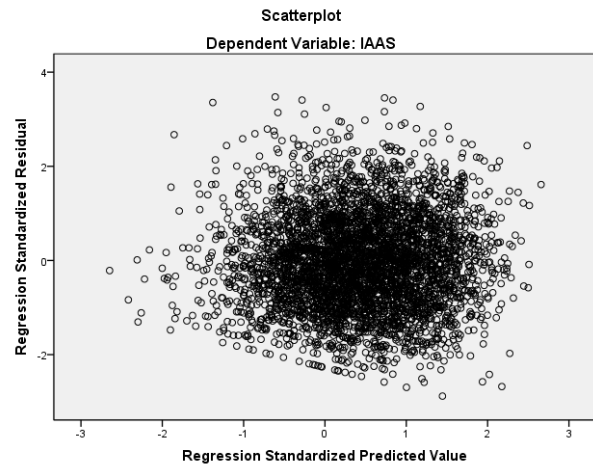
Variables	Questions wording	Values and categories
Doing last 7 days: paid work	Using this card, which of these descriptions applies to what you have been doing for the last 7 days?	0 Not marked 1 Marked
Doing last 7 days: unemployed, actively looking for job		
Doing last 7 days: retired		
Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe	Now, using this card, to what extent do you think [country] should allow people from the poorer countries outside Europe to come and live here ?	1 Allow many to come and live here 2 Allow some 3 Allow a few 4 Allow none 7 Refusal 8 Don't know 9 No answer
Immigrants make country worse or better place to live	Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?	11-point Likert scale where (0) means worse place to live and (10) better place to live. 77 Refusal 88 Don't know 99 No answer
Immigration bad or good for country's economy	Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries?	11-point Likert scale where (0) means bad for the economy and (10) good for the economy. 77 Refusal 88 Don't know 99 No answer
Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce	I am now going to read out some statements about men and women and their place in the family. Using this card, please tell me how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.	1 Agree strongly 2 Agree 3 Neither agree nor disagree 4 Disagree 5 Disagree strongly 7 Refusal 8 Don't know 9 No answer
Women should be prepared to cut down on paid work for sake of family		

Variables	Questions wording	Values and categories
Placement on left right scale	In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". Using this card, where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?	11-point Likert scale where (0) means left and (10) right. 77 Refusal 88 Don't know 99 No answer
How satisfied with present state of economy in country How satisfied with the national government	On the whole how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy / government in [country]?	11-point Likert scale where (0) means extremely dissatisfied and (10) extremely satisfied. 77 Refusal 88 Don't know 99 No answer
How satisfied with the national government	Now thinking about the [country] government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?	11-point Likert scale where (0) means extremely dissatisfied and (10) extremely satisfied. 77 Refusal 88 Don't know 99 No answer
Feeling about household's income nowadays	Which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?	1 Living comfortably on present income 2 Coping on present income 3 Finding it difficult on present income 4 Finding it very difficult on present income 7 Refusal 8 Don't know 9 No answer
Household's total net income, all sources.	Using this card, please tell me which letter describes your household's total income, after tax and compulsory deductions, from all sources? If you don't know the exact figure, please give an estimate. Use the part of the card that you know best: weekly, monthly or annual income.	01 J - 1st decile 02 R - 2nd decile 03 C - 3rd decile 04 M - 4th decile 05 F - 5th decile 06 S - 6th decile 07 K - 7th decile 08 P - 8th decile 09 D - 9th decile 10 H - 10th decile 77 Refusal 88 Don't know 99 No answer

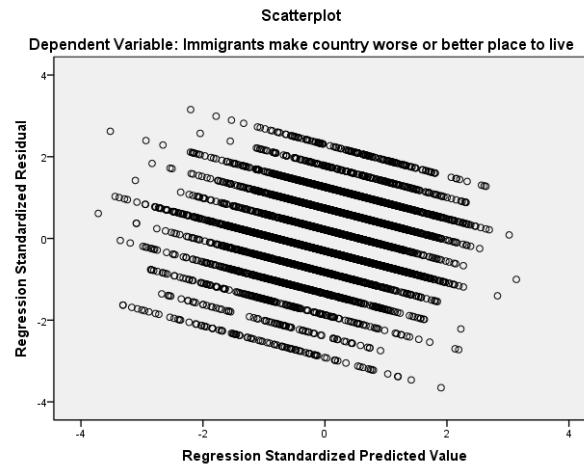
Variables	Questions wording	Values and categories
Had less security in job, last 3 years	Please tell me whether or not each of the following has happened to you in the last three years. Have you had less security in your job?	1 Yes 2 No 6 Not applicable 7 Refusal 8 Don't know 9 No answer
To what extent had to manage on lower household income last 3 years	Using this card, please tell me to what extent each of the following has applied to you in the last three years. To what extent had to manage on lower household income last 3 years.	00 Not at all 01 01 02 02 03 03 04 04 05 05 06 A great deal 77 Refusal 88 Don't know 99 No answer
Current job: job is secure	Using this card, please tell me how true each of the following statements is about your current job. My job is secure.	1 Not at all true 2 A little true 3 Quite true 4 Very true 6 Not applicable 7 Refusal 8 Don't know 9 No answer
Gender	Respondent's gender	1 Male 2 Female 9 No answer
Age of respondent, calculated	Based on answer from item "And in what year were you born?"	999 Not available
Years of full-time education completed	About how many years of education have you completed, whether full-time or part-time? Please report these in full-time equivalents and include compulsory years of schooling.	7 Refusal 88 Don't know 99 No answer
How religious are you	Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?	11-point Likert scale where (0) means not at all religious and (10) very religious 77 Refusal 88 Don't know 99 No answer

Annex 13: homoscedasticity assumption checks

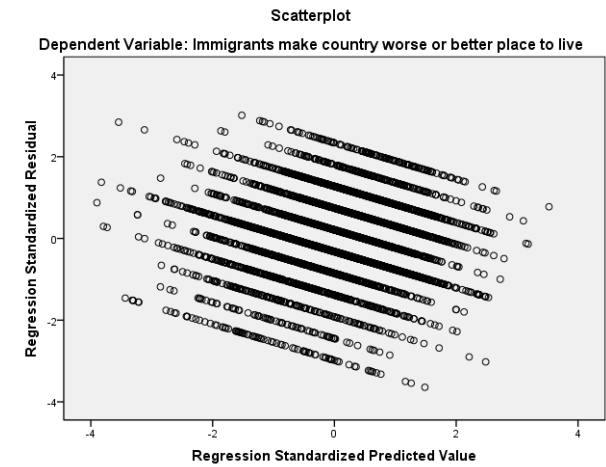
Model 1



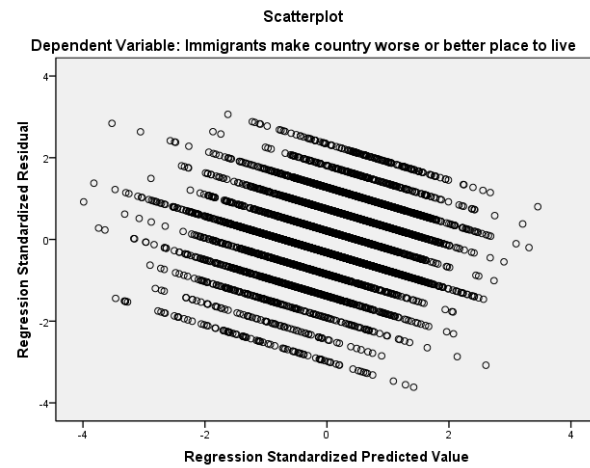
Model 2



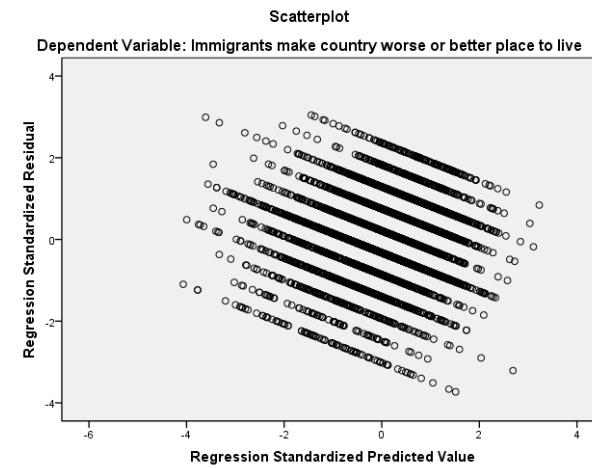
Model 3



Model 4



Model 5



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