

Do Demographics and Support for the Common EU Migration Policy Influence Local Politicians' Attitudes towards Refugees? A Survey Experiment.

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Abstract

Discrimination against minorities occurs in each segment of society. Scholars of different disciplines dedicated their work to identifying and explaining discrimination in all its manifestations, antecedents and implications. Following insights from economics and social sciences, and given the increasing challenge of migration to Europe, the present study examines the attitudes towards asylum seekers held by local Flemish politicians. It investigates whether asylum seekers' gender, religion and educational background, and politicians' support for the common EU migration policy influences these attitudes. The analysis of the data collected from all Flemish municipalities by means of a multifactorial survey experiment points towards discriminatory tendencies against males, Muslims and non-academics. They are perceived as more threatening and as being less in need of protection and asylum. Common EU migration policy support was shown to be a partial moderator. These findings can be interpreted by uniform and repetitive media coverage, taste-based discrimination, stereotyping, group competition theory and representative bureaucracy theory.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

International migration

"We are facing the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. Above all, this is not just a crisis of numbers; it is also a crisis of solidarity."

(Ban Ki Moon, Washington, D.C. .2016/4/15).

International migration is a complex and dynamic phenomenon, highly linked to cross-border activities. Immense developments in human mobility, technology and the increasing global exchanges in commodities, capital, intellectual property and culture, all integral parts of globalisation, are driving forces behind international migration (Castles, 2010). Even though, *migration* is a frequently used term most people are familiar with, finding a clear definition is challenging due to its complex and multi-level nature. How far does a person have to move? For how long? Do origin and destination have to differ socially and culturally? Generally, according to Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson (1998:34) migration entails "the movement of a person between two political or administrative units for a certain period of time." However, it is important to acknowledge migration being different from *spatial mobility*, "which embraces all possible forms of geographical movement including flows of people over international borders [...]" (ibid).

Predominately, migration is understood as problematic for both, the sending and the receiving country (Castles, 2000). For decades scholars argued that migration has negative consequences for countries of origin because of *brain drain*, a concept coined in the 1960s, referring to the transfer of human capital of highly educated people from developing to developed countries and consequently increased dependency on remittances (Beine, Docquier & Rapoport, 2008). Contemporary research rather supports the notion of *co-development*, which entails that international migration became circulatory (Castles, 2010). Since transnational engagement fosters development of home societies, through feedback loops in terms of investment and transfer of knowledge, migration can be beneficial for countries of origins (Trauner & Deimel, 2013). According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), migration can facilitate sustainable, inclusive development and growth in sending as well as receiving countries, if supported by appropriate policies (UN DESA, 2017).

Nevertheless, on the receiving countries side, migration is often seen as a threat to prosperity, security and identity (Castles, 2013). Due to the resulting perceived need to control migration, migrants are grouped into the following categories: (1) *Temporary labour migrants*, often referred to as guest workers (2) *high skilled migrants*, moving within transnational labour markets (3) *irregular migrants*, people staying after their claims for protection having been denied status or people not claiming asylum in the first place (4) *refugees*, people in need of protection according to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) and the 1967 Protocol (5) *asylum seekers*, people seeking protection but the claim is still pending (6) *forced migrants*, including not only refugees but also people fleeing natural disasters, (7) *humanitarian migrants*, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2016) people have been granted protection, either refugee status, subsidiary or temporary protection (8) *family member migrants*, people entering a country in the course of family reunification, and (9) *return migrants*, migrants returning to their country of origin voluntarily or involuntarily (Castle, 2000; Angeloni & Spano, 2018; Moeckli, Shah & Sivakumaran, 2018). The legal and social context differs substantially between these different migrant groups. Whereas skilled labour migrants are welcomed, since they fill critical labour gaps or create jobs as entrepreneurs, asylum seekers are often unwanted and vulnerable (UN DESA, 2017; Geddes, 2005). However, in an increasingly globalised world it is impossible to keep open borders for movements of information, commodities, capital and highly skilled labour, but close these for asylum seekers (Castles, 2000).

Within the past seven years, migration statistics increased from 220 million to 258 million people (UN DESA, 2017). Whereas two thirds are hosted by high-income countries, the situation is different when it comes to refugees. Refugees and asylum seekers, constituting more than ten percent of the entire migrant population, are mainly hosted by developing countries (82.5%). Regulation attempts to control migration do not appear sustainable and long-term, but simply “ad hoc” responses to exceptional events (Castles, 2000). On top of that, Western free trade ideologies or hidden foreign affair agendas play a considerable role in explaining international migration movements, which Western migration policies then try to control (Castles, 2004). Examples of such contested policies are numerous. For instance, subsidised EU agricultural products are exported at significantly lower prices than production costs, to less developed countries (Oxfam, 2004). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) policy conditions tied to loans

are accused of being responsible for crisis situation in East Asia, Latin America or Russia (Stiglitz, 2004). In 2017, 60% of German arms have been exported to politically instable states engaged in conflict situations, such as Saudi Arabia (Zeit Online, 2018/1/23).

One explanation for the steady increase in migration, despite growing attempts to control it is given by Castles (2010). Whereas efforts to control migration follow a *national logic*, the driving forces follow a *transnational logic* (Castles, 2010). Hence, international migration policies can only be effective if explicitly linked to long-term political agendas including trade, development and conflict prevention. Reducing the North-South divide in income, employment, social wellbeing and security would be key to migration management (Castles, 2010).

All factors discussed above point towards the pressing problem of fragmented regime-building for international migration. The absence of a single international organisation responsible for migration (Molle, 2014). Even though, certain international organisations deal with specific aspects of migration, for instance the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), these organisations are often criticised for not collaborating well. In addition, some new frameworks have been developed already, for example within the International Labour Organisation (ILO) or the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers. However, mainly only sending countries have ratified these frameworks (Castles, 2000). Furthermore, this incapability of the world community to effectively and ethically control migration flows not only bears negative consequences for sending and receiving states, but for the migrating individuals themselves. An increase in criminalisation of (irregular) migrants could be observed in the past years (Trauner & Deimel, 2013). *“Once national governments closed the front door of legal immigration more or less strictly, most of the entrance occurred through the side door (asylum seekers, refugees, family reunification) or through the back door (illegals)”* (Straubhaar, 2000:348). What followed were serious human rights implications in form of inhumane detention centres, a flourishing human trafficking industry and uncountable deaths in the Mediterranean (Geddes, 2005; Angeloni & Spano, 2018).

EU migration crisis. A recent example of problematic international migration is the so called “European Union (EU) migration crisis”. In 2015, 1.5 million migrants entered the EU. The arrivals led to a breakdown of the external borders in Greece and revealed immense shortcomings and inequalities in the EU common asylum and migration policy (Rijpma, Spijkerboer & den Heijer, 2016). The common EU asylum and

migration policy developed gradually, starting with the treaty of Amsterdam (1999) incorporating immigration and asylum in the areas of free movement, security and justice (AFSJ) and completed by the Lisbon treaty (2009) stating that all matters on immigration and asylum are decided on by ordinary legislative procedure and qualified majority voting in the Council (Hix and Hoyland, 2011; Geddes, 2005).

However, although a considerable proportion of competences in migration matters was shifted to the European level, member states kept a lot of discretion; hence, discrepancies in national asylum systems are still present. For instance, because of differences in procedural, reception and protection standards, substantial cross-country variations in asylum recognition rates indicate that the EU common asylum and migration policy is not living up to its expectations (Toshkov & de Haan, 2013). Critical voices argue that national asylum policies entered into a *race to the bottom* by providing lower levels of protection in order to prevent people to ask for asylum and that this policy approach triggers not only avoidance behaviour of asylum seekers, but encourages disobedience with EU legislation and competition between member states. For example, Italy and Greece, overburdened by the crisis and left alone by other member states, do not register all asylum seekers and consequently encourage secondary movement to other EU states (Rijpma et al., 2016). Moreover, among others Hungary, Slovakia and Poland refuse to take a share of refugees as agreed upon in the Council Decision 12098/15 on relocation (Politico 2015/09/21). Overall, it can be said that the lack of solidarity and willingness of the member states to jointly respond to the inflow of people turned the refugee crisis into a humanitarian crisis and an existential challenge for the EU (Batalla Adam, 2017).

Furthermore, the crisis had a considerable impact on the EU's credibility as a normative human rights actor as its common migration and asylum policy is criticised for not being consistent with international human rights law. The *EU-Turkey Statement* concluded on March 18 2016 is accused by numerous legal scholars and NGOs for violating the principle of *non-refoulement* (article 33, Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees). Accordingly, Turkey cannot be considered as a safe third country (Carrera, den Hertog & Stefan, 2017; Betalle-Adam, 2017).

Under the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), everyone has the right to asylum. However, the right to asylum has not been translated into a legally binding treaty (Hirsch & Bell, 2017). Attempts to create a Declaration on Territorial Asylum in 1970s failed. Only the non-refoulement principle outlined in the Convention

relating to the Status of Refugees (1951, 1967) is legally binding. Refugees are protected from refoulement once being under the jurisdiction of a state. However, states, including EU member states often hinder people from entering their territory in the first place. These states have implemented various *non-entrée policies* keeping out potential asylum claimants. Italian or Hellenic coastguard boats intercepting refugee boats before reaching European waters, exemplify a *protection gap*. Two landmark cases should be mentioned in this context. First, *Hirsi Jamaa and others vs. Italy*, referring to eleven Somali and thirteen Eritreans intercepted by the Italian coastguard in the Mediterranean Sea, handed over to Italian military and finally brought back to Libya (Strasbourgobservers, 2012/03/01). Second, *PPU X and X v. Belgium*, referring to a Syrian family, which applied for a visa in the Belgian embassy in Lebanon in order to be able to claim asylum in Belgium. Their application was rejected. In both cases article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) should have applied; however, Belgian and Italian authorities argued article 3 (ECHR) would only have applied if applicants were within the territory (Strasbourgobservers, 2017/04/14). According to Gibney (2004:2), “[...] *schizophrenia seems to pervade Western responses to asylum seekers and refugees; great importance is attached to the principle of asylum but enormous efforts are made to ensure refugees never reach the territory of the state where they could receive its protection*” (2). Legal theorists and political philosophers criticise this protection gap by arguing in the tradition of Hannah Arendt. Refugees often lack citizenship rights and in combination with weak enforcement of international law, they are deprived of human rights and exist in a zone “outside the pale of law” (Arendt 1973: 276).

As migration is a dynamic process, involving social beings seeking liveable lives for themselves and their families we are convinced that research should always consider implications for the individual human being by looking at sociological and psychological models alongside economic, political and legal factors (Castles, 2004). This study does so by investigating the attitude towards refugees in Europe held by local politicians and representatives in Flanders, the Northern Dutch-speaking federal region within the Kingdom of Belgium. Prior research on migration and discrimination allows us to assume that attitudes are at least partially influenced by refugees’ and asylum seekers’ demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, religion, education). Ford, Morrell and Heath (2012) found that people tend to have a negative attitude on immigration, but are positive when asked about specific groups of migrants. Generally, people are more

favourable towards those being granted refugee status than other migrants (O'Rourke & Sinnott, 2006). However, recently a tendency of perceiving refugees as a security threat emerged, resulting in the erosion of their more favoured status (Working paper, Chantham House, 2007). Mixed feelings may be linked to the dominant narrative that the claim for asylum by arriving refugees, especially young men, is not legitimate. Ipsos MORI, a global market and research specialist shows that over half of the people participating in the survey in 2016 agreed with the statement: *"most foreigners who want to get into my country as a refugee really aren't refugees. They just want to come here for economic reasons, or to take advantage of our welfare services"* (Ipsos MORI, 2016).

From the elaborations above it becomes apparent that migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are among the most vulnerable in society and thus prone to facing severe discrimination (UN DESA, 2017). Therefore, research investigating migration and discrimination is essential. This study contributes to the theme of migration, especially discrimination against refugees, by drawing on theories from different social sciences. Our study distinguishes itself from previous research in three ways. First, we are conducting a survey experiment, which enables us to draw causal inferences on how refugees' demographic characteristics influence attitudes towards them. Second, by focusing on Flemish local politicians this study goes beyond the usual focus of measuring attitudes of citizens or civil servants. This focus increases its relative contribution to the political discourse on refugees. Moreover, the big sample size (N=934) enables us to generalise to the population of 9453 local Flemish politicians. Third, based on psychological theory, we include EU migration policy support as a moderator, in order to draw a more nuanced picture.

As shown in the introduction, we are aware of the clear conceptual and legal differences between the terms migrant, asylum seeker and refugee, defined by international law. However, as a matter of practicality and consistency we are using asylum seekers also when referring to refugees.

Problem statement (research objective)

The objective of this study is to examine the attitudes of local Flemish politicians towards asylum seekers. Attitudes play an important role in discrimination. Hence, it will be examined whether attitudes are influenced by asylum seekers' demographics (gender, religion, educational background) and whether the support of and commitment

to the common EU asylum and migration policy has a moderating effect on the demographic-attitude relation. We will approach this research objective by conducting a survey experiment. Our participants will be confronted with eight vignettes, describing a hypothetical, but realistic situation of a person seeking asylum in Europe. Vignettes are valuable for social science research, since they make it possible to measure attitudes, beliefs, values or perceptions and allow for manipulation of the independent variables, thus limiting issues of endogeneity (Hughes & Huby, 2004)

Research questions

The research objective described above will be approached by investigating the following research question:

What is the relationship between (1) demographic characteristics of asylum seekers, (2) support for EU asylum and migration policy and (3) attitudes towards asylum seekers among local Flemish politicians?

Theoretical sub-questions

1. What does the literature state about the underlying mechanisms of discrimination based on demographic characteristics?
2. What does the literature state about attitudes towards minorities in society and public institutions?
3. What does the literature state about the moderating role of supportive attitudes held by politicians towards the common EU (migration) policy?
4. What is the theoretical relationship between demographic characteristics of asylum seekers, politicians' support for common EU policy and discriminatory attitudes by politicians?

Empirical sub-question

5. Does the theoretical relationship between demographic characteristics of asylum seekers, support of common EU asylum and migration policy and discrimination by politicians held, in the case of local politicians' attitudes towards asylum seekers and EU asylum and migration policy?

The first four theoretical sub-questions will be answered in the literature review. The fifth one will be answered in the theoretical framework. The empirical sub-question will be approached in the research design and analysis.

Relevance

Practical relevance. According to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), currently approximately 65.5 million people had to flee their homes. This number includes 22.5 million refugees, half of them underage. These statistics mark the highest levels of displacement on record (UNHCR, 2017/07/17). Since 2015, the peak of the “EU refugee crisis”, migration as a topic arrived in the European public discourse and ever since dominates political discussions and election campaigns across countries (Trauner & Turton, 2017). Migration and forced displacement is closely linked to discrimination against ethnic minorities, a hot research topic for decades already. Four examples illustrate this link.

First, on a political level, cross-country variations in asylum recognition rates within the EU point towards discrimination against certain ethnic groups. For instance, in 2009, 33% of Afghans who applied for asylum received full refugee status in France, but only 6% in the UK (Toshkov, 2014). These variations also underline the crucial role of local legislators in asylum policies, as EU member states kept lots of discretion over migration matters (Toshkov & de Haan, 2013). Research has shown that different variables, such as (1) economic situation, (2) unemployment, (3) gross domestic product (GDP), and for this study particularly relevant, (4) a government’s position, influence recognition rates (Neumayer, 2005). Therefore, this study’s research objective of measuring local politicians’ positions in form of attitude towards asylum-seekers is highly relevant.

Second, towards the end of 2017 there was the incident of Sudanese asylum seekers being send back from Belgium to Sudan upon a decision made by local authorities in Flanders under the responsibility of Theo Franken, Secretary of State for Asylum and Migration from the Flemish nationalist party, known for controversial statements on migrants (NY times, 2018/01/10; Politico, 2018/01/11). At least three of the Sudanese were tortured upon their repatriation, which is a clear breach of article 3 (ECHR) (NY times, 2018/01/10).

A third example of discrimination against asylum seekers comes from Germany. A well-established charity organisation (Tafel) denied foreigners, particularly single men

with ethnic minority backgrounds, most of them asylum seekers and refugees, access to free food (Washington Post, 2018/2/27; ZEIT, 2018/3/2).

Fourth, research has shown that in Europe *second generation migrants*, people born and raised in Europe face similar levels of (economic) discrimination than *first generation migrants* (Carlsson, 2010). This constitutes a violation of international law for protection of minorities (Moeckli, Shah & Sivakumaran, 2018). According to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) countries are obligated to take measures promoting substantial equality “in all areas of economic, social and political and cultural life, full and effective equality between persons belonging to a national minority and those belonging to the majority” (article 4(2) FCNM). Preventing *net ethnic penalties* for future generations requires increased awareness of discrimination based on demographics, such as race or religion (Wood, Hales, Purdon, Sejersen & Hayllar, 2009).

This study raises awareness by investigating the influence of gender, religion and educational background on local legislators’ attitudes towards asylum seekers. Local governments are responsible for managing and delivering public policy (Walker & Andrews, 2013). In the different regions of the EU, for instance in Flanders, “street level bureaucrats” implement central EU asylum and migration policies (Vinzant & Crothers, 1998 as cited in Walker & Andrew, 2013:101). Not only do local governments carry out central decisions directly affecting individuals, they are also “active agents, drawing their own agenda, policy strategies and key questions/answers to challenges related to integration” (Zapata-Barrero, Caponio & Scholten, 2017:242). Hence, local politicians’ attitudes matter. Their decisions determine what it means to be an asylum seeker. Their decisions are prerequisites of successful integration (Czymara & Schmidt-Catran, 2016). Moreover, examining the influence of EU policy support on attitudes is crucial, particularly in these for the EU critical times.

Theoretical relevance. Discrimination against migrants and asylum seekers has been approached by scholars from various theoretical angles. The majority of studies come from Australia, the US, the UK and Scandinavian countries (Arai, Bursell & Nekby, 2016; Deros, Nguyen & Ryan, 2009; Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016). Far less took place in other European countries, not to mention Benelux countries. Moreover, discrimination studies focus mainly on ethnic minorities, immigrants or women. Research applying economic, sociological and psychological theories on structural discrimination against

asylum seekers, such as labour market discrimination or discrimination in public organisations is nearly non-existing.

Bonjour, Servent and Thielemann (2017:414), criticise research related to EU migration either uses “too much theory that has not been tested empirically or too many empirics with weak theoretical foundations” (414). By drawing on insights from behavioural public administration, such as *representative bureaucracy theory*, and also slightly touching upon well-established economic, psychological and sociological concepts our study overcomes this shortcoming. Moreover, research on the interaction of EU and local actors is still in its infancy (Ibid.). By measuring attitudes of local politicians towards asylum seekers and by investigating how this relationship is influenced by the politicians’ support for the common EU migration policy as well as whether there are indications ethnic or religious discrimination, we contribute to the academic discourse (Giulietti, Vlassopoulos & Tonin, 2017).

Furthermore, existing literature mainly focuses on attitudes held by managers or citizens towards immigrants, not specifically asylum seekers and refugees (e.g. Zorlu, 2016; Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017). For instance, Dr. Stijn Baert, labour economist at Gent University, published an extensive research register of correspondence experiments investigating discrimination in the labour market based on various characteristics¹. Our study adds to this empirical evidence by looking at potential discrimination by local politicians against asylum seekers in Belgium. Hence, our study attempts to narrow down the considerable gap in the literature.

Outline

This paper is structured as followed: first, a multidisciplinary literature review is performed. How economist, psychologists and sociologist explain the prevalence and underlying mechanism of discrimination, especially against ethnic minorities will be examined. In more detail, we will consult studies on labour market discrimination, stereotyping and group conflict. Following from that, relevant behavioural administration concepts, such as representative bureaucracy will be introduced. Then, the current state of research on attitudes and behavioural intentions will be explained. The literature review finishes by briefly touching upon discussing the role of common EU migration and asylum policy support. Second, our theoretical framework will be smoothly derived from the literature review. Central concepts will be selected and used

¹ http://users.ugent.be/~sbaert/research_register.htm

to formulate theory-based hypotheses. Third, the choice and methodology of a multifactorial survey experiment will be explained. Special attention will be devoted to the data collection process as well as validity and reliability. Fourth, the results of our experiment will be analysed. Finally, in the discussion the results will be interpreted and critically discussed. This also implies reflecting upon theoretical and practical implications, shortcomings and future research recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature review

In this multidisciplinary literature review, the four theoretical sub-research questions will be discussed:

1. What does the literature state about the underlying mechanisms of discrimination based on demographic characteristics?
2. What does the literature state about attitudes towards (ethnic) minorities in society and public institutions?
3. What does the literature state about the moderating role of supportive attitudes held by politicians towards the common EU asylum and migration policy?
4. What is the theoretical relationship between demographic characteristics, central policy support and discriminatory attitudes by politicians?

We will analyse and integrate literature on discrimination, behavioural intentions and behavioural administration theories. Moreover, we will touch upon research concerning the role of politicians' support for EU migration policy. By going beyond the boundaries of public administration, this study provides unique value added contributions to the academic discourse on discrimination, particularly, discrimination against racial or religious minorities. To get a first rather general overview, a systematic literature search in the databases, *Scopus* and *Web of Science* was performed. We used search terms, such as "ethnic discrimination", "stereotypes", "social categorisation", "representative bureaucracy" etc.. Results were sorted and filtered by relevance, citation and date. Moreover, we have been provided with an extensive research register by labour economist Stijn Bearts, comprising articles on hiring discrimination based on various demographics ranging from ethnicity to pregnancy or disability. These articles were

scrutinised and analysed in Scopus regarding their relative contributions to the discrimination theme. Among other functions, we used “Cited by” in Scopus in order to identify further relevant articles. In addition, *Google Scholar* was used. Furthermore, consulting policy briefs and conference papers helped us to get an impression on how experts outside academia perceive our topics of interest. All in all, we identified 77 articles, policy papers, reports and conference papers, which will be discussed in the following.

The ultimate goal of this literature review is to analyse how existing literature explains the influence of demographic characteristics, such as ethnicity, gender, religion or educational background of asylum seekers on local politicians’ attitudes. Furthermore, we are interested in the moderating role of EU migration policy support. Therefore, we will systematically break down the research question into three different variables: (1) discrimination, (2) attitudes and behavioural intentions, and (3) EU asylum and migration policy support.

We will start off by acquiring a solid understanding of how different academic fields define and approach discrimination. Then, we will narrow down the analysis to discrimination against asylum seekers in society and public institutions. The role of attitudes and behavioural intentions in the discrimination process will be examined. Finally, we will have a look into the moderating logic of central policy commitment. In sum, after having read this section the reader should be able to grasp the theoretical relationship between demographic characteristics, EU migration policy support and attitudes held by politicians and draw a connection to discrimination.

Discrimination based on demographics

The EU and its member states present themselves as normative human rights actors adhering to the fundamental principle of substantive equality (Moeckli et al., 2018). This stands in sharp contrast with the fact that demographics, such as certain ethnicities or religions, still remain an obstacle to full democratic, economic and cultural participation in the European society (Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012).

As discrimination has considerable negative implications for a person’s wellbeing and as it is a dynamic concept that evolves alongside our ever-changing society (National Research Council, 2004) it is crucial to examine its underlying mechanisms and theoretical explanations in the light of recent political, economic and societal developments (e.g. economic recession, terroristic attacks, migration flows, rising

populism). Discrimination comes in many different forms and often cumulates into racism, sexism or homophobia.

Given the aim of this study, namely measuring the influence of asylum seekers' gender, religion and educational background on the attitude of local politicians towards asylum seekers, this literature review focuses on research investigating discrimination based on these three demographic variables.

In fact, discrimination is lacking a universal definition. The way it is understood and approached depends heavily on a study's research question and scientific paradigm (Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016). For analysing previous research, we are guided by the definition provided by the United Nations' International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). Discrimination is defined as *"any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life"* (article 1). Furthermore, we are referring to the EU Directive 2000/43/EC, which states, *"the principle of equal treatment shall mean that there shall be no direct or indirect discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin. [...] direct discrimination shall be taken to occur where one person is treated less favourably than another is, has been or would be treated in a comparable situation on grounds of racial or ethnic origin; indirect discrimination shall be taken to occur where an apparently neutral provision, criterion or practice would put persons of a racial or ethnic origin at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons, unless that provision, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate aim and the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary"* (article 2). Although two major, influential international organisations defined and legally prohibited discrimination based on demographics it is still a widespread problem. In the following, we are analysing economic and behavioural theories on discrimination and critically reflect on their explanatory strength regarding discrimination against asylum seekers in Europe.

Economics

Economic theory of discrimination is rooted in Becker's "The Economics of Discrimination" (1957) and Arrow's "The Theory of Discrimination" (1973). In economic theory, markets are the central institutions in which individual actions occur and moral

feelings should be separated as much as possible, since they might easily lead to non-analytical, unconstructive policies. Instead, discrimination is analysed in terms of variation in productivity (Arrow, 1998). According to Arrow (1973), discrimination from an economic perspective entails that expectations associated with certain personal characteristics, such as ethnicity or gender, which are unrelated to productivity matter in the labour market (Andriessen, Nievers, Dagevos & Faulk, 2012).

Andriessen et al., (2012) conducted a field experiment on ethnic discrimination of Turkish and Moroccans (labour migrants in the 1960s) as well as Surinamese and Antilleans (postcolonial migrants). The researchers sent out 2080 job applications with Dutch or foreign sounding names of one of the mentioned nationalities. The overall aim was to investigate a difference in the likelihood to be invited for a job interview. Dutch natives were significantly more likely to be invited than people with migration backgrounds. In a second regression model, differences between the four minority groups were tested. Moroccans had the lowest chance to be called for an interview. A third regression model tested for interaction effects of ethnicity and gender. Migrant men were least likely to get an interview. The findings clearly point towards ethnic discrimination, but also towards *social dominance* or *ethnic hierarchies* as well as an interaction of ethnicity and gender, all further elaborated on in the analysis of the sociological approach to discrimination.

Overall, economic theory of discrimination distinguishes between two types of discrimination (1) *taste-based discrimination* (Becker, 1957) and (2) *statistical discrimination* (Arrow, 1971). The first one implies that employers, co-workers or customers have negative attitudes or discriminatory tastes towards a certain group of people, usually called out-group. Hence, interaction is either entirely avoided or compensation is demanded, for instance in form of lower wages (Arrow, 1998; Baert & de Pauw, 2014). According to Arrow (1971), taste-based discrimination contradicts the notion of economic actors as being pure profit maximisers, since discrimination is costly. Organisations discriminating based on taste would not survive in the open economy. Hence, organisations refraining from having racial preferences would have a competitive advantage (Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016). However, Riach and Rich (1991:247) added that the prevention of the “psychic cost” of contact with the “wrong” ethnicity [...] is often prioritised.”.

In contrast, *statistical discrimination* states that economic actors are rational, but insufficiently informed about a person’s productivity and value for the organisation

(Guryan & Charles, 2013). This lack of information is filled in by expectations based on accessible characteristics and estimates of the group's average performance (Andreissen, et al., 2012; Baert & de Pauw, 2014). Demographics, such as minority status, gender or age may become indicators of productivity and competence. Usually, this leads to negative - however, possibly also to positive discrimination of particular groups (e.g. "Asians are hard working"). An unrelated demographic becomes a relevant proxy for unobserved information (Andreissen et al., 2012; Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016).

Most studies investigate economic discrimination and its underlying mechanisms by attempting to distinguish between taste-based and statistical discrimination focusing on ethnic or gender discrimination in hiring procedures (Guryan & Charles, 2013; Adriessen et al., 2012; Beart & de Pauw, 2014; Arai, Bursell & Nekby, 2016; Beart & Vujić, 2016). These studies have been useful in showing the limited effectiveness of public policy countering discrimination; however, they have also been criticised for not being able to successfully disentangle both taste-based and statistical discrimination. More specifically, the majority of these studies was unable to properly isolate the proportion of disparities in the outcome variable, which could be attributed to taste-based or statistical discrimination (Guryan & Charles, 2013). However, blaming researchers for methodological flaws would be premature, since one has to acknowledge that tastes and information are not entirely independent of each other. Actors having discriminatory tastes often explain their negative attitudes and behaviours by referring to stereotypical beliefs about certain groups (Arai et al., 2016).

Furthermore, according to Giulietti, Vlassopoulos and Tonin (2017), taste-based discrimination vanishes with an increase in market competition and a decrease in entry barriers. Certainly, globalisation enhanced market deregulations and competition; thus, in the private sector discriminatory attitudes came under pressure. However, this development did not affect discrimination in the public sector, including public organisations or governmental administrations (Levine, Rubinstein & Levkov 2014).

In order to get a more holistic understanding of the concept of statistical discrimination, implying that an individual is judged based on characteristics associated with his/her social group (stereotypes) (Andreissen et al., 2012) and in order to answer the research question on how the literature explains discrimination based on demographics, and its underlying mechanisms, we have to turn to psychological theories on stereotyping and social categorisation.

Table1*Empirical studies on discrimination in the field of economics*

Literature	Journal	Type of Study	Topic	Country	Findings
Andreissen, Nievers, Dagevos & Faulk (2012)	Work and Occupations	Correspondence study	Labour market discrimination: Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese, Antillean vs. Dutch names	Netherlands	(-), Support SMTH
Beart & Pauw (2014)	Economics Letters	Vignettes; student sample	Labour market discrimination: Turkish vs. Flemish names	Belgium	(-)
Beart, Cockx, Gheyle, & Vandamme (2015)	ILR Review	Correspondence study	Labour market discrimination: Turkish vs. Flemish names	Belgium	(-), Discr. vanishes in presence of recruitment difficulties; discr. only if not interfering with profit maximisation
Arai, Bursell & Nekby (2016):	International Migration Review	Field experiment based on correspondence method	Labour market discrimination: Arab vs. Swedish names; moderator job experience	Sweden	(-), Support SMTH; work experience does not mitigate stereotyping
Zschirnt & Ruedin (2016)	Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies	MA: 81 studies OECD countries, 1990-2015	Labour market discrimination: private vs. public sector	OECD	(-), In all countries; higher in private sector, esp. taste based discr.
Riach & Rich (1991)	Cambridge Journal of Economics	Correspondence study	Labour market discrimination: Greek, Vietnamese vs. Australian names	Australia	(-), Higher for Vietnamese
Beart & Vujic (2016)	Economics Letters	Correspondence study	Labour market discrimination: Turkish vs. Flemish names	Belgium	(-), Prosocially engagement lowers discr.
Giulietti, Vlassopoulos & Tonin (2017)	European Economic Association	Correspondence study	Racial discrimination in access public services: Black vs. White	USA	(-), Support taste-based discr. SES not confounding variable
Levine, Rubinstein, and Levkov 2014	Critical Finance Review	Correspondence study	Racial discrimination financial sector: Black vs. white	USA	(-), Higher taste-based discr; bank deregulation reduces racial disc. (-) NL: main effect Arab name discr. & no main effect Arab affiliation; US: main effect Arab affiliation & no main effect Arab name
Derous, Nguyen & Ryan (2009)	Human Performance	Correspondence study	Labour market discrimination: Arab vs. Dutch names	Netherlands, USA	

(-): Significant negative effect of treatment
 SMTH: Subordinate male target hypothesis

Psychology

Stereotypes are defined as rigid beliefs about attributes, traits and behaviours of a social group (Banaji & Hardin, 1996). Stereotypes are the result of *social categorisation*, a basic cognitive process in which individuals organise and simplify their complex social environment into smaller entities. Recognising patterns, similarities as well as

differences between people, enables us to function in society (Klauer & Wegener, 1998; Sani, Bennett, & Soutar, 2005). These cognitive organisation processes occur automatically and often unconsciously, by a spontaneous activation of internalised schemas and sets of associations (Devine, 1989). How exactly individuals categorise depends, among other things on the salience of a category. Examples for salient categories would be gender or ethnicity. Social categorisation implies maximising *between-category differences* and *within-category similarities*. Therefore, stereotypes can lead to discrimination across all segments of society. Examples would be hiring discrimination in the labour market as seen above (e.g. Adriessen et al., 2012; Beart & de Pauw, 2014) or overt discrimination against asylum seekers as the recent incident in Germany, where a charity organisation (Tafel) banded foreigners from receiving free food, shows (Washington Post, 2018/27/2; ZEIT, 2018/3/2). Moreover, stereotypes can have severe policy implications for minorities (Fiske, 2000). For instance, decreasing and widely differing asylum recognition rates, racial profiling, the increasing power of anti-immigration parties or the cuts of social benefits for asylum seekers (e.g. Burmann & Valeyatheepillay, 2017; Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2017/2/1; Nasralla, 2017 [Reuters]). These examples fit the “inevitable notion” of stereotype, which entails that stereotypes develop through socialisation, from early infancy on; hence, they are strongly internalised and become part of the “social heritage of a society and no one can escape learning the prevailing attitudes and stereotypes assigned to the major ethnic groups” (Ehrlich, 1973, as cited in Devine 1989:5). However, this notion needs to be put into perspective, since there is a difference between *knowledge of a cultural stereotype* and *personal beliefs*. Being socialised according to certain, for instance racial stereotypes, does not necessarily mean that one accepts or endorses them (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Billig, 1985). Personal beliefs might be incongruent with a person’s stereotypes. In such cases, although stereotypes cannot be erased entirely from someone’s memory, new beliefs about a social group can inhibit automatic stereotype-congruent responses (Ibid.).

Another crucial concept in the context of discrimination is *stigma*. Traditionally, stigma research has a more individualistic approach compared to stereotype research. As Link and Phelan (2001:336) state, stigma used to be understood as something “in the person” rather than a tag that others place upon an individual. Hence, the focus laid on the perceived experience of the individual and the consequences for their social interaction. Compared to stereotypes, stigma was thought to result less often in social or

economic exclusion. However, contemporary research re-conceptualises stigma as an element of labelling, stereotyping, separating, status loss, and discrimination. Stigmatising co-occurs in situations where social, economic and political power differences allow discriminating processes to unfold (Link & Phelan, 2001). Link et al., (1987) conducted a factorial survey experiment. They examined whether people perceive “former mentally ill patients” as more dangerous than “former back-pain patients.” The main finding was that significantly more people who believed former mentally ill patients were dangerous, showed high desire for social distance. Thus, stereotypical and stigmatising attitudes contribute to the desire for social distance and hence, to overt discrimination not only against mentally ill people, but against all kinds of minority groups including asylum seekers and refugees.

Sociology

Whereas economic theory analyses discrimination in relation to markets and productivity, and social/cognitive psychology regards discrimination as a negative consequence of automatic social categorisation, sociologists examine discrimination in the light of *cultural distance* and *group conflict* (Andriessen et al., 2012, Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016).

Social dominance theory states that social groups are not only distinguished but put into a rank order according to their social status in society (Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016). In their aforementioned field experiment Andriessen et al., (2012) found that in the Dutch labour market there is discrimination between different minorities. The results clearly show that out-groups are placed into hierarchies (Bleich, 2009). For instance, people from Morocco are ranked lower than people from Surinam due to a higher perceived religious and cultural distance. Fitting to that, Bleich (2009) focused on ethnic hierarchies and religion. His findings show that in the UK and France Muslims are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy, which indicates anti-Muslim attitudes or even Islamophobia. According to Bleich (2009), Muslims are the most disliked religious group and perceived as highly dissimilar compared to other religions. Whereas Bleich (2009) states that these discriminatory tendencies are recent developments (past 20 years), other scholars argue that Europeans identify themselves to a large extent by their Christian tradition, and always have clashed with Islam, since the fall of Constantinople (Adidaa, Laitinb & Valfortc, 2010). The latter argument might seem a bit far-fetched; however, European values are often equalised with Christian values and play a major

role in political decision-making, such as asylum policies, accession talks of Turkey or discussions about *Leitkultur* in Germany (German leading culture) (Esser, 2004; Baç, & Taskin, 2007).

Social dominance theory also includes the notion of beliefs of cultural superiority and the perceived threat of status loss (Snellman & Ekehammer, 2005), both related to *ethnic group conflict theory*. According to ethnic groups conflict theory, discrimination is a result of realistic or perceived competition for limited resources (e.g. jobs), which can also be symbolic (e.g. cultural identity) (Andriessen et al., 2012; Derous, Nguyen & Ryan, 2009). It has been argued that underlying mechanisms of discrimination are the *need for emotional security* and/or *self-enhancement*. Thus, discrimination functions as a means to compensate the threat (Snellman & Ekehammer, 2005). Whatever psychological mechanism is underpinning this phenomenon is not within the scope of this study; however, important to acknowledge is the outcome, namely increased in-group solidarity, out-group derogation and hostility (Andriessen et al., 2012).

As people belong to multiple social groups they can be discriminated based on different demographics. According to the *double burden hypothesis* migrant women face most discrimination because they fit into two low status groups. Interestingly, research has frequently disconfirmed this hypothesis in favour of the *subordinate male target hypothesis*, which states that male migrants face more discrimination, as they appear more threatening (Andriessen et al., 2012; Navarrete, McDonald, Sidanius & Molina, 2010). Originating from social dominance theory, the subordinate male target hypothesis emphasises intra-male competition for resources for men and fear of sexual coercion for women (Navarrete, McDonald & Molina, 2010; Veenstra, 2013). Hence, gender is a strong moderator in discrimination against minorities (Veenstra, 2013). Another explanation for minority men being more discriminated against states that minority women tend to be stereotyped according to general female stereotypes rather than specific national or ethnic stereotypes. Hence, as Arai, Bursell and Nekby (2016) argue specific ethnic stereotypes, in their case Arabic stereotypes, are more associated with men, since stereotypes about people with Arabic backgrounds are usually male stereotypes, for example being patriarch (Davis, Taylor & Murphy, 2014). Table 2 summarises sociological studies on discrimination. Davis et al.'s, (2014) findings appear reasonable in the context of the "EU migration crisis", especially after the New Year's Eve sexual assaults in Cologne in 2015/16 (The Independent, 2016/6/11). In the aftermath, single migrant men became the main target of ethnical discrimination (e.g.

hart aber fair, 2016/2/29 [political talk show]; The Economist, 2016/1/16). Young men travelling without their families are perceived as not being vulnerable and constituting a security threat, whereas actually they are “doubly vulnerable” since they are lacking protection and support from their families and on top of that also not from the host governments (Davis et al, 2014: 37). Moreover, most of the Syrian men between 18 and 42 years already faced serious discrimination in Syria, since they refused to join the military (Davis et al., 2014). Table 2 summarises empirical sociological research on discrimination.

Before looking at discrimination from a less theoretical perspective, we want to draw attention to the relative contributions, of economic, psychological and sociological theory. Figure 1 illustrates their differences and overlaps. Whereas psychology takes a micro-level perspective and economics takes a macro-level perspective on discrimination, sociology can be seen as connecting and integrating both. For instance, the subordinate male target hypothesis, predominantly researched by sociologists cannot be explained without referring to its underlying evolutionary psychological mechanisms (e.g. competition for resources, threat of sexual coercion) and its economical implication (e.g. hiring discrimination). The same holds true for taste-based discrimination and stereotypes. Figure 1 not simply shows differences and overlaps in discrimination research; it also illustrates the degree of cross-fertilisation between the three disciplines.

Table2
Sociological studies on discrimination

Literature	Journal	Type of Study	Topic	Country	Findings
Bleich (2009)	Patterns of Prejudice	Review survey experiments 1988-2008	Attitudes towards Muslims over time	UK, France	(-), Negative attitudes increased, but Muslims not at bottom at hierarchy
Snellman & Ekehammer (2005)	Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology	Survey	Ethnic hierarchies	Sweden	North Europeans (top)- Middle East groups (bottom)
Derous, Nguyen & Ryan, 2012	Human Performance	Correspondence study & lab experiment	Racial discrimination	Netherlands	(-), Support double jeopardy against Arab women
Navarrete, McDonald, Sidanius & Molina (2010)	Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	Lab experiment (conditioning)	Racial discrimination: black vs. white faces; SMTH	USA	(-), Support SMTH
Veenstra (2013)	Gender roles	Survey experiment (phone)	Subordinate group identities and discrimination (iv: race, gender, education); SMTH	Canada	(-), Support SMTH

(-): Significant negative effect of treatment
SMTH: Subordinate male target hypothesis

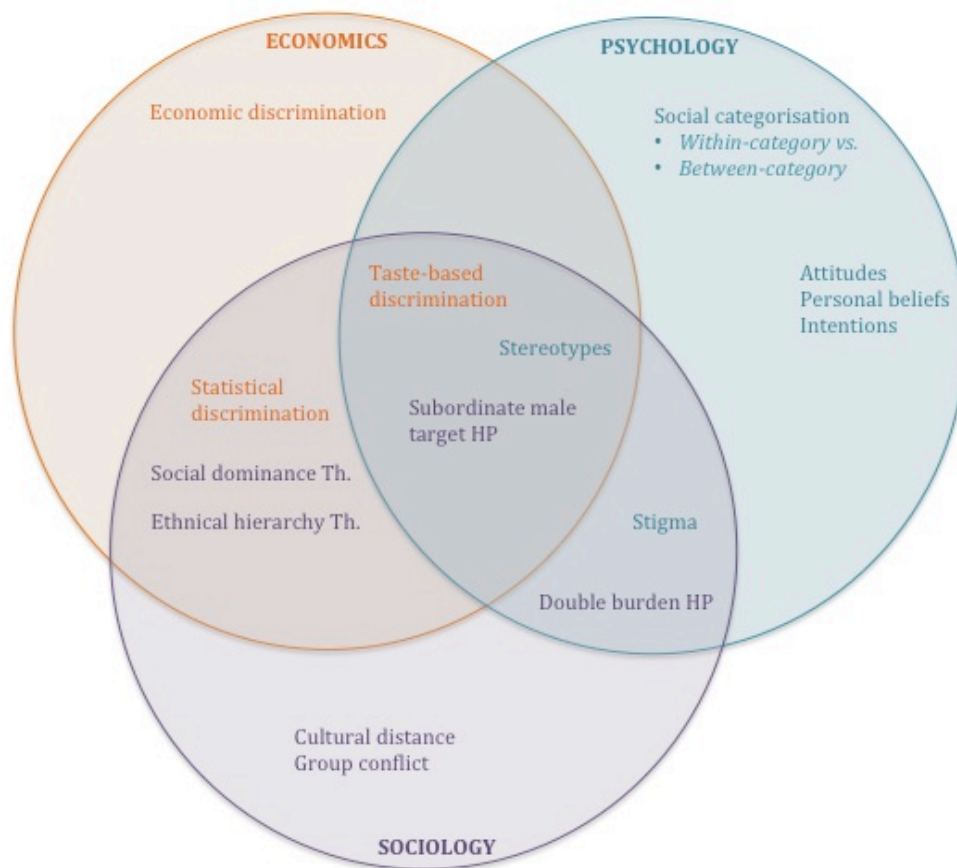


Figure 1. Similarities and differences in discrimination research

Discrimination against migrants in society

After having answered the first research question on how scholars from economics, psychology and sociology explain the underlying mechanisms of discrimination, the following section will use these concepts to analyse the implications of discrimination for asylum seekers in society and public institutions. Now, we will turn to the first part of the second sub-question; what does the literature state on discrimination against asylum seekers in society? Discrimination based on ethnicity, gender and religion is widespread in European countries, despite having anti-discrimination legislations in place, e.g. Treaty of Amsterdam, article 13². To access public attitudes, research frequently analyses the media, as it heavily influences civic political opinion formation (Bleich, Bloemraad & Graauw, 2015). Thus, by strategically connecting reports on migration to citizens' security or economical concerns, media is a tool for generating public discourse and opinions (Bleich et al., 2015; Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017).

Inspired by the significant findings of their previous content analysis on the prevalence of intergroup threat by Northern Africans in Belgian news (more than 50% contained security, economic or cultural threat items), van der Linden and Jacobs (2017) conducted an experiment in which they tested the respective effects of intergroup threat news reports. Exposure to news on intergroup threat, especially security-related issues, increased the negative perception of asylum seekers.

Moreover, van Klingeren, Boomgaarden, Vliegenthart and de Vreese (2015) reviewed studies on media coverage on immigration to Europe. They found that the public attitudes towards migrants are shaped by the perceived size and composition of the immigrated population. Perceived threats significantly increase, as resources appear to become scarcer. According to Deros, Nguyen and Ryan (2009), perceived threats have a greater influence than realistic conflicts of interests. A systematic discrepancy between the estimated size and the real size of an immigration group can be attributed to visibility of this group in the media. In 2015, approximately 1.5 million irregular migrants crossed European borders and newspapers in various member states discussed the "Islamisation of Europe". However, looking a bit deeper shows that this number only constitutes 0.3 % of the EU's population (Rijpma et al., 2016). Media

² "Without prejudice to the other provisions of this Treaty, and within the limits of the powers conferred by it upon the Community, the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission, and after consulting the European Parliament, may take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation."

coverage, especially its tone and frequency, strengthens stereotypes, which in turn might facilitate negative attitudes and consequently discrimination. Furthermore, changes in the valence of media reports were shown to exert a substantial influence on immigration attitudes (Sides & Citrin, 2007). Vollmer and Karakayali (2017) analysed the role of major German newspapers (Focus, Der Spiegel, Der Tagesspiegel, Bild, Die Welt, Die Zeit, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, and Süddeutsche Zeitung) in the public discourse on refugees. Germany is a prime example, as the discourse was especially volatile. Whereas the discourse towards refugees was very positive in summer/autumn 2015, it quickly turned into suspicion and hostility (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017). Media coverage was dominated by pro-refugee reports (Trauner & Turton, 2017). Key discursive events were the death of approximately 800 people in the Mediterranean after another boat sank in April 2015 ("The Mediterranean sea becomes a mass-graveyard"; Bild, 2015/9/25), the picture of the dead body of Aylan Kurdi, a three year old Syrian boy, washed up on the Turkish shore after his family tried to reach Kos by boat in September 2015 and pictures of people brutally pushed back at trajectory of border sites at the Balkan route (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017). One example would be the incident of a Hungarian camerawoman kicking a refugee carrying a child (New York Times, 2015/9/8). The media almost exclusively reported stories about vulnerable families and children, which facilitated compassion and helping behaviour in the European society (Karakayali & Kleist, 2015). The pro-refugee public atmosphere was too fragile and hence, it quickly became into suspicious and hostile (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017). Events like the Paris or Brussels terror attacks and massive sexual assaults against women at New Year's Eve in Cologne marked a turning point in the valence of media reporting. The public discourse on refugees became hostile, which was also reflected by an increase in attacks on refugee shelters reported by the German Federal Bureau of Crime (BKA) or various contested policies (e.g. emergency law in Austria). Pointing towards discrimination based on gender, the media increasingly presented young men as having rationally decided to come to Europe (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017). Refugees initially described as vulnerable were perceived as dangerous. For instance the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung published headlines, such as "trust has been lost" or "citizens are getting more sceptical than politicians," (FAZ, 2016/02/01, as cited in Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017).

The multifactorial survey experiment by Czymara and Schmidt-Catran (2017) showed that attitudes towards refugees substantially changed towards the beginning of

2016. The public acceptance of refugees decreased, as news reporting and public speeches became more negative. Consequently, formations of islamophobic right wing protest movements could be observed (Bleich et al., 2015). In line with ethnic group conflict theory described earlier the increased reporting on religious aspects might have reminded people of their own identities and their distinct differences, which facilitates feelings of competition (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

In sum, since many Europeans have little encounters with asylum seekers, their attitude towards them is highly media-based (van Klingereren et al., 2015). So far it has been discussed how different schools of thought explain discrimination based on demographics. Following from that, we briefly analysed how media coverage can facilitate anti-immigration attitudes. Now, we will examine how discrimination in public organisations affects asylum seekers. Therefore, we will focus on discrimination by representatives, hence, civil servants and local politicians.

Discrimination in public organisations

It is not surprising that discrimination constitutes also a problem in the public sector, across different public services (Giulietti, Vlassopoulos & Tonin, 2017). Research has shown that political elites, including European civil servants and local legislators discriminate people based on demographics, such as ethnicity or religion (Butler & Brockmann, 2011; Adman & Jansson, 2017). For instance race, which is operationalized by foreign sounding names, influences the responsiveness of local legislators when sought out for advice on registrations or access to childcare facilities (e.g. Einstein & Glick, 2011; Beutler & Brockmann, 2011). Beutler and Brockmann (2011) found that responsiveness of legislators to ethnic minority members is influenced by the racial composition of the parties they belong to. This matter of fact will be further discussed below (see section on representative bureaucracy).

In the context of this study, it is important to take a specific look at discrimination in public organisations in Belgium. Merry (2005) points out that Belgium has a high concentration of Muslim immigrants and that this is often framed as a challenge for educators and policy makers. His article specifically focuses on social exclusion of Muslims in Flemish public schools. It defines social exclusion as “the overall process whereby persons—usually for reasons having to do with race, ethnicity, physical disability, or sexual orientation, but we would add religion—are excluded from the social, cultural, political, and economic benefits that accrue to others” (Merry, 2005:3).

Findings show that Muslims are usually placed into lower tracks of education, teachers are not sufficiently trained in intercultural education, teachers have stereotypes such as Muslim boys are lacking a sense of guilt and educators are rarely interacting with families of Muslim students. Moreover, Flemish schools have upper limits for migrant children. In sum, social exclusion of Muslims in public schools is one indicator of discrimination. School staff's biased attitudes towards Muslim students negatively influence their educational achievements and consequently their life prospects. All this contributes to a negative perception of Muslims in society, which results into structural discrimination in the form of unequal access to employment, poor housing, and racial profiling police. On top of that, according to the author, Muslims frequently became "scapegoats (*boucs émissaires*)" for economic problems, higher crime rates, and failure of schools (Merry, 2005:19).

After acknowledging that discrimination occurs in public organisations, questions about underlying motivations of discriminatory attitudes and behaviours follow naturally. Do local politicians and other people of public responsibility discriminate out of strategic, electoral conditions or due to intrinsic biases and attitudes (Costa, 2017)? To date, only very few studies investigated the underlying mechanisms; hence, confident conclusions cannot be drawn (Costa, 2017). This research gap again underlines the importance of our study.

In order to finalise the answer to the second sub-question on attitudes towards ethnic minorities in public organisations, literature on *behavioural public administration* and *attitude formation* as well as *behavioural intentions* needs to be consulted.

Behavioural public administration

As can be seen from the review above, discrimination is an interdisciplinary topic, which is frequently approached from an economic, sociological and psychological perspective. However, since this research falls within the scope of international public management, the public administrative perspective will also be discussed.

Within public administration research it can be observed that psychological sciences methodology and theoretical concepts become popular. They are used to take a approach individual behaviour and/or attitudes from a micro-level perspective (Grimmelikhuijsen, Jilke, Olsen & Tummers, 2016). This approach is called *behavioural public administration*. Important to note is that behavioural public administration is a two-way interaction. In past years, mainly public administration used to draw on

theories borrowed from psychology. However, nowadays psychological research benefits from the cross-fertilising interaction, too. For instance, political-administrative settings help to increase the ecological validity, which is usually very low in controlled, randomised laboratory experiments (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2016). Prominent examples of behavioural administration theories are blame avoidance, negativity bias, and interesting for our study *representative bureaucracy* and *attitudes*.

Representative bureaucracy

Being one of the core concepts of public administration, *representative bureaucracy* needs to be discussed in the scope of discrimination in public organisations. Representative bureaucracy states that in order to act on behalf of the people, citizens' demographics, originally their social origin and class, but nowadays also their gender and religion, must be mirrored by the representatives (Kingsley, 1944). Overall, scholars distinguish between *passive representation* and *active representation* (Mosher, 1968). The first one simply refers to representatives having similar demographics as the represented people (Meier & Stewart, 1992). Slightly extending the notion of passive representation, *symbolic representation* states that passively represented bureaucracies shape policy outcomes, without any action taken by the representatives (van Ryzin, Riccucci & Li, 2017). The degree to which representatives share the preferences, values and attitudes of people they represent influences their behaviour (Anderson, 2017). In contrast, active representation is referred to as *policy congruence* – implying making and implementing decisions matching the represented people's preferences (Meier & Stewart, 1992).

The majority of research focuses on symbolic representation and its findings consistently points towards symbolic representation increasing citizens' compliance, cooperation and co-producing behaviour regarding public policies (van Ryzin, Riccucci & Li, 2017). For instance, higher female police representation increased the reporting rate of domestic violence. Moreover, trust, and resulting from that cooperation as well as compliance was higher among African-Americans the higher the proportion of African-American police (wo)men.

However, studies like Andersen (2017) are more relevant for our research question. They have shown that ethnic minorities are underrepresented in public institutions. Being underrepresented often means dealing with negative implications, such as differences in responsiveness or impaired access to public services (Einstein &

Glick, 2017; Giulletti, Vlassopoulos & Tonin, 2017). These indications of discrimination underline the vital importance of attitudes of civil servants and local legislators.

Since attitudes are a crucial variable within the field of behavioural public administration and determine how representatives formulate and implement certain policies (Andersen, 2017), the following section will take a closer look into attitude formation and behavioural intention.

Attitudes and behavioural intentions

In 1968, Wicker disconfirmed the widespread notion of attitudes being the main determinant of human behaviour. Ever since, behavioural scientists, particularly social psychologist investigate which factors complement attitudes in predicting human behaviour, such as norms, intentions and/or perceived control (Armitage & Connor, 2001). Attitudes are defined as fairly stable evaluations of socially significant objects, persons or events that make a person think, feel, or behave positively or negatively accordingly. Opposed to “cold” cognitions - dispassionate assertions about the world, attitudes must be understood as “hot,” meaning they have motivational components and can generate and/or are generated by emotions (Gleitman, Gross & Reisberg, 2011:514; Hogg & Vaughan, 2011).

In order to fully grasp the concept of attitudes, we have to distinguish it from the overlapping concept, *intentions*. Behavioural intentions describe self-instructions to engage in particular behaviours (Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Whereas behavioural intentions exclusively lead to purely volitional (controllable) behaviours, attitudes are based on volitional and non-volitional factors (e.g. beliefs, norms) (Warshaw & Davis, 1985).

Findings on the specific role of each factor differ greatly, from attitudes having the most predictive power (Triandis, 1979) to behavioural expectations being the main predictors of behaviour (Warshaw & Davis, 1985). However, these findings have to be interpreted cautiously, since already in 1988, Sheppard, Hartwick and Warshaw argued that humans often overestimate the amount of control they possess over their behaviour.

In their meta-analysis, Webb and Sheeran, (2006) review 47 experimental studies investigating attitude-behaviour and intention-behaviour relations. According to the *theory of reasoned action (TRA)* two factors explain how attitudes are linked to behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). First, social pressure occasionally prevents

attitudes, usually being able to induce behaviour, to not being translated into action (e.g., *Most people who are important to me think that I should/should not do x*). Hence, the social context needs to be considered, too. Thus, in order to make statements about the attitude of local politicians towards migrants, we have to take the social and political situation into account (e.g. upcoming elections, influencing right populist parties). Second, attitudes affect behaviour indirectly, via intention formation. Put differently, behavioural intentions mediate the impact of attitudes on behaviour. The bottom-line of the TRA is intentions being the most proximate predictor of behaviour.

After being criticised of neglecting the role of control, Ajzen (1991) extended his TRA into the *theory of planned behaviour (TPB)* by incorporating a locus of control component (perceived control) as mediator of the intention-behaviour relation (Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Still, intentions are the main driving force behind behaviour; however, perceived control has a substantial moderating influence. A slightly different view is taken by Triandis (1979), who argues that carrying out an intention requires a certain amount of control (perceived and actual) over the behaviour in question. Furthermore, habituation plays a considerable part in the intention-behaviour relation. Behaviour engaged in frequently, becomes automatized and hence, intentions' impact on behaviour will be decreased (Webb & Sheeran, 2006).

Gibbons, Gerrard and Lane (2003) smoothly integrate these findings. They state that behaviour can result from two routes, the *reasoned action* or the *social reaction* route. The first one entails that behaviour follows behavioural intentions, which are a function of attitudes, beliefs, and past behaviour. The second one highlights the notion of behaviours always occurring in a social context and therefore, diminishing the impact of intentions. Often behaviour is not intended, but simply occurs due to conducive circumstance. In other words, specific situational circumstances might override people's intentions. In this context, research usually refers to risk behaviour, such as smoking or unprotected sex.

Up till this point we can say that attitudes lead to intention formation, which in turn lead to behaviour. However, this link is moderated by control. Whereas intention formation is heavily influenced by perceived control, the translation of intentions into behaviour depends mainly on actual control. In Figure 2 intention-behaviour relation and the role of attitudes is illustrated in a simplified manner.

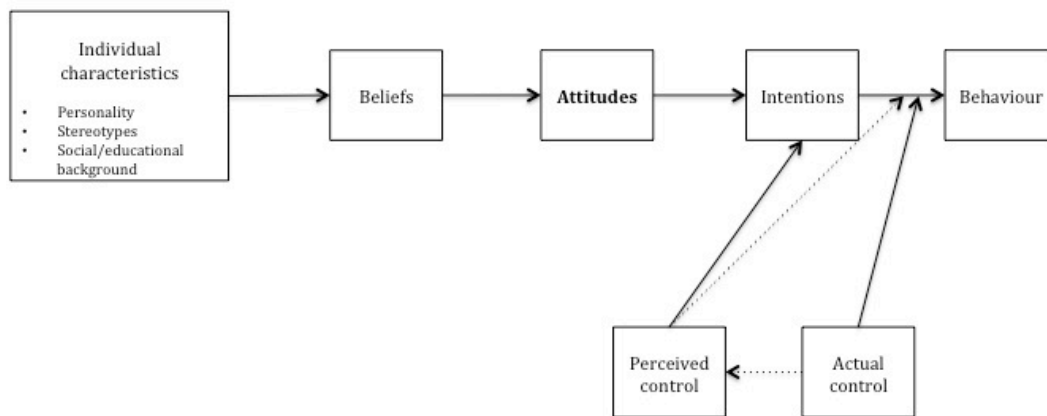


Figure 2. How attitudes influence behaviour. Own illustration based on Fishbein & Ajzen, 2005.

Next to the conceptual factors in figure 2, *habits*, indicating that past behaviour are a powerful predictor of future behaviour. Furthermore, measurement-related moderators, such as time interval, between the measurement of the intention and the behaviour, type of measurement (self-report vs. objective measures) and sample, are important to consider next to intentions. Bearing in mind the political context of our study, the “EU migration crisis”, past behaviour might only be of secondary importance, since most current politicians were never involved in dealing with a migration wave before. Moreover, since we only measure attitudes, not actual behaviour time interval can be neglected as a moderator.

In sum, based on the analysis above and backed up by meta-analytic studies (Armitage & Connor, 2001; Sheeran, 2002) we are confident in saying that attitudes shape intentions, which are highly correlated with behaviour ($r = .47$) (Armitage & Connor, 2001). Moreover, intentions accounted for 28% of the variance in behaviour (Armitage & Connor, 2001).

O’Rourke and Sinnott (2006), looked into attitudes about immigration. They analysed data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), a cross-national collaboration programme conducting annual surveys on social science topics. Participants in 24 OECD countries were asked about their attitude towards immigration. It was shown that attitudes towards refugees are more positive than attitudes towards immigrants in general. A respondent’s educational level and feelings of national identity

and superiority influenced attitudes. Since national feelings are correlated with conservatism and also anti-immigration attitudes, O'Rourke's and Sinnott's (2006) findings suggest examining the role of one's position on the political spectrum as well as the opinion on European integration, especially regarding migration matters. Therefore the next section briefly analysis the role of political orientation regarding EU migration policy in local politicians' attitudes towards asylum seekers.

The role of support of EU migration policy in attitude towards refugees

In the following the third sub-question will be approached. Does politicians' support for the common EU asylum and migration policy have an effect on their attitudes towards refugees?

Among political scientists and migration researchers there is a debate on the nature of politicization of migration. Are stances on migration manifested by politicians' position on the left-right spectrum (Ignazi, 1992); or is the migration topic too complex and multifaceted so that it cross-cuts the traditional ideological divide and thus even risks ideological coherence among parties (Giandfreda, 2017)? Obviously, in this debate it is crucial not to lose sight of potential confounding variables, for instance electoral successes of far-right parties.

In the context of EU asylum and migration policy and especially in the light of the current "EU migration crisis", it can be said that on a national level, centre-left parties take a pro EU position, advocating for more solidarity, shared responsibility and deeper integration in the area of freedom, security and justice, under which competences on migration fall. They frame the crisis as mainly humanitarian. In contrast, centre-right parties advocate for enhanced border controls and other restrictive measures. They frame the crisis as a security crisis and perceive the common EU asylum and migration policy (e.g. compulsory relocation schemes) as going against national interests (Giandfreda, 2017). For instance, eight EU member states, including Belgium, set up border controls because of "events requiring immediate action" (article 25, Schengen Border Code). Populist parties exploit the window of opportunity the crisis provides for their anti-establishment and anti-EU ideas (Giandfreda, 2017).

Interestingly, the centre-left and centre-right divide vanishes at the EU level. Both, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) and the European People's Party (EPP) are EU integrationist and call for a comprehensive and coherent approach to the crisis (Giandfreda, 2017). For a more holistic understanding, we briefly

need to discuss how the common EU asylum and migration policy came into being. Servant and Trauner (2014) explain that during the Amsterdam Treaty negotiations an advocacy coalition consisting of the interior ministers within the Council, and the EPP were able to push through their vision of restrictive rights for asylum-seekers as well as discretion for member states in dealing with migration, opposed to a fully harmonised and more refugee-friendly policy favoured by the centre-left fraction in the European Parliament and by the Commission. “Asylum must not be a lottery” was one of the stances the Commission took (Com, 2013, as cited in Servant & Trauner, 2014:1152). Back then the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group (ALDE), including the Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats, became a pivotal actor by finally supporting the Council-EPP advocacy coalition (Servant & Trauner, 2014).

Attitudes towards migrants are inevitably linked to the perceived legitimacy of the EU (Giandfreda, 2017). Findings of her content analysis of parliamentary discussions in Europe showed, among other things that centre-left representatives tend to state migration needs to be accepted as a “structural phenomenon” in order to be dealt with successfully (Giandfreda, 2017:99). They held humanitarian and solidary attitudes towards migration and perceive the EU as a fully legitimate actor. The situation appears different for centre-right representatives. Centre-right parties tend to perceive migration as a security threat, endangering economic and cultural achievements. Criticising the EU’s legitimacy in migration matters, they call for more national sovereignty regarding asylum policies, border controls and return policies (Gianfreda, 2017).

However, for our study Bearing this in mind, together with the fact that member states retain a high level of discretion, it is important to consider local legislators’ opinions on the common EU policy as a potential moderator of their attitudes towards asylum seekers.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework for our survey experiment. The theoretical framework shows “which route on the theoretical map the researcher has to take in order to arrive at the desired destination” van Thiel (2014:40). Mainly, we will draw on theories of behavioural administration briefly introduced in chapter two. Combining insights from behavioural public administration, especially *representative bureaucracy* and economic, psychological and sociological discrimination theories, such as *taste-based discrimination* and *subordinate male target hypothesis*, will enable us to formulate our expectations about the survey experiment into four different hypotheses. By the end of this chapter the fourth research question will be answered:

“What is the theoretical relationship between demographic characteristics, central policy support and discriminatory attitudes by politicians?”

Behavioural public administration

Discrimination is shown to be a multifaceted phenomenon, frequently approached by various disciplines. Behavioural public administration entails that public administration scholars make use of psychological theories and methodology in order to take a micro-level perspective on behaviour and/or attitudes of individuals (Grimmelikhuijsen, Jilke, Olsen & Tummers, 2016). Micro-level entails describing intra-individual, psychological processes. Hence, behavioural public administration looks at individuals or groups of citizens, employees, and managers within the public sector and it focuses on behaviour and attitudes (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2016).

Whereas public administration used to draw on theories borrowed from psychology predominantly, recently also psychological research benefits from the collaboration between the two social science disciplines (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2016). Behavioural public administration constitutes as a suitable theoretical framework for our study. It enables us to closely examine attitudes of local politicians towards asylum seekers. One for this study relevant concept born out of the dialogue of psychology and public administration is the theory *representative bureaucracy*.

Representative bureaucracy

The representative composition of the workforce of a bureaucracy in terms of gender, racial and religious diversity can promote democracy in various ways. Generally,

representative bureaucracy includes two forms of representation. First, passive representation refers to the extent demographics and other social characteristics of the representatives reflect those possessed by the general population (Meier & Stewart, 1992). Second, active representation refers to decision-making in line with the policy preferences of the represented population (van Ryzin, Riccucci & Li, 2017).

Ethnic minorities are underrepresented in public organisations and this often has negative implications for members of minorities (Andersen, 2017). Countering underrepresentation is important for mitigating stereotypes and negative attitudes within public institutions. This results in a more positive treatment of minority members without sacrificing any benefits for the majority (Meier, Wrinkle & Polinard, 1999).

Underrepresentation of certain minority groups also influences representatives themselves, their attitudes, their corresponding behaviours and hence, policy outcomes. Attitudes are shaped by a person's social environment and according to Meier and Nigro (1976), they vary depending on demographics. Since people from different social economic backgrounds and ethnic groups were raised differently, their attitudes are likely to differ. Therefore, it is crucial to take into account the social and political context in which local governments and bureaucracies function. Riccucci and Van Ryzin's (2017) analysis of literature on representative bureaucracy in public organisations is consistent with this view. Their findings show that certain demographic characteristics within an administration correspond with a specific set of values and attitudes which, when better represented, translate into more favourable policy outcomes for an underrepresented minority. This argument postulates passive and active representation to be interconnected. More specifically this means local officials and bureaucrats, whose demographics, traits and attitudes coincide with the population's demographics, are very likely to *actively* represent constituents' interests (Krislov 1974; Mosher 1968).

Hence, local legislators' demographic backgrounds transform into attitudes, which then affect decision-making and policy implementation (Anderson, 2017). For instance, women are more likely to report sexual assault crimes to female police officers. In turn, these show increased activity in enforcing anti sexual assault legislations. Better representation of ethnic minorities could have similar beneficial effects.

This fact refutes a persistent concern within public administration research, namely that local government officials are guided exclusively by individual or

institutional interests. Contemporary research shows that bureaucracies indeed represent the interests of their constituents (Einstein & Glick, 2017).

It is important to note that in order for the linkage between passive and active representation to hold true, a crucial condition must be met. In the policy making process, representatives must have discretion to act upon personal values (Andersen, 2017). Hence, attitudes towards other people matter and according to Riccucci and van Ryzin (2017) they are the binding element between passive and active representation.

Consistent with the argumentation above, Meier and Nigro (1976:1) state, “If the attitudes of administrators are similar to the attitudes held by the general public, the decisions administrators make will in general be responsive to the desires of the public”. In theory, according to representative bureaucracy, this would imply, given the ethnic and religious diversity present in Flanders, usually disadvantaged minority groups would be better represented (Einstein & Glick, 2017).

In practice, attitudes towards certain minorities and especially refugees and asylum seekers are highly influenced by the media (van Klingeren et al., 2015) and shaped by social contact cues (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005).

Ethnic group conflict theories

Since the media constitutes a communicative bridge between political and social actors, shapes perceptions of high stake topics and hence, influences civic political views on migration it is crucial to include insights from media analyses into our theoretical framework. Through strategic selection of topics, the media has “agenda-setting power” (Bleich, Bloemraad & Graauw, 2015:859). In 2015, media coverage was dominated by economic, humanitarian pragmatic pro-refugee reports, for example on numerous civic society initiatives (Trauner & Turton, 2017). Thereby, positive, empathic attitudes were generated, which resulted into an inter-dependent “philanthropic relationship” between the host country’s population and the refugees (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017:127). During this period of time, media coverage clearly focused on children and families; which according to Karakayali and Kleist (2015), serve as visual markers for being in legitimate need of help. However, the welcoming public atmosphere was fragile and quickly hospitality and empathy changed into antipathy, which was among other things reflected by contested policies (e.g. emergency law in Austria) (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017). Especially after the sexual assaults incidents in Cologne 2015/16, media coverage increasingly focused on young men. Asylum seekers were no longer framed

and presented as deserving protection, but as a security threat and having had voluntarily decided to leave their country for purely economical reasons (Vollmer & Karakayali, 2017). Moreover, political speeches on predominantly allowing highly skilled people to immigrate became more and more (TAZ, 2018/7/2). Already in 1958, Blumer stated in an essay on collective threat perception that marking events enormously contribute to the development of the racial out-groups and hence, racial stereotypes and discrimination. News reporting and public speeches emphasising certain characteristics, such as country of origin, gender or religion, and ignoring other aspects, after the Cologne incidents facilitated the development of the out-group, single, low-educated, Muslim men, mainly from Northern Africa. This example illustrates that depending on the frequency and tone, media coverage strengthens stereotypes, which in turn may facilitate group competition behaviour and consequently discrimination. Therefore, our theoretical framework must also include psychological and sociological theories.

Ethnic conflict theory states that different groups compete for (perceived) limited resources. These resources can be concrete and material, such as jobs or childcare spots but also abstract, such as identity (Andriessen et al., 2012).

The subordinate male target theory entails that male members of a minority group are facing more severe discrimination than their female counterparts, since they are perceived as more threatening (Navarrete et al., 2010; Veenstra, 2013). Integrating these two theories into our theoretical framework, alongside representative bureaucracy might lead to the assumption of disadvantageous attitude formation towards asylum seekers by local officials; and consequently to the ultimate outcome of biased and discriminatory decision-making on a local level. Therefore, based on insights from representative bureaucracy, ethnic conflict theory and subordinate male theory we expected the following:

Hypotheses

HP 1: If the asylum seeker is male, attitudes of local politicians will be more negative.

HP 2: If the asylum seeker has no academic background, attitudes of local politicians will be more negative.

HP3: If the asylum seeker is Muslim, influences the attitude of local politicians will be more negative.

HP4: When politicians' support for EU asylum and migration policy is high, the above-mentioned negative effects will be weaker.

All four hypotheses are visualised in Figure 4. The minus sign next to the three horizontal arrows indicates a negative relationship between the specific independent and the dependent variable. The vertical arrow indicates the moderating influence of support for EU asylum and migration policy on hypotheses 1 – 3.

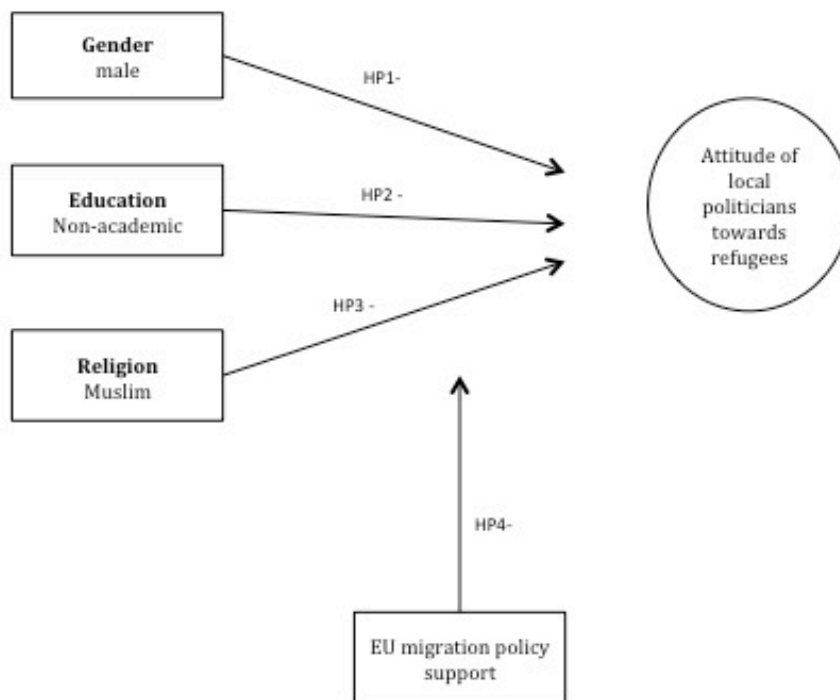


Figure 4. Conceptual model.

Chapter 4: Methodology & Research Design

Within this chapter the methodology and research design will be outlined. First, we will “set the empirical stage” in which we discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen research design and the sample characteristics. Second, the data collection process, including the randomisation procedure and the online software package *Qualtrix* will be explained. Third, we will elaborate on our independent and dependent variables. Next, the statistical analysis will be explained and finally, we will highlight the study’s reliability and validity.

Research method

This study examines whether asylum seekers’ demographics have an effect on Flemish local politicians’ attitude towards them and whether this relationship is influenced by the politicians’ support for the common EU asylum and migration policy. Put differently, we want to investigate the potential causal link between the independent variables, usually referred to as X on the dependent variable, usually referred to as Y. In our case, X would be refugees’ demographics gender, religion and educational background, and Y would be politicians’ attitude towards refugees. Whether this X-Y relationship is moderated by EU migration policy support will also be tested. As our research question implies a causal link between the independent variables and dependent variable, an experiment, more specifically a multifactorial survey experiment, needs to be conducted. Even though, the experimental method became increasingly popular in the field of public administration, since being the only approach establishing causality, it is still in its infancy (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010).

Experiments provide various benefits. They enable us to manipulate the independent variables, to control extraneous factors and then to measure the effect on the dependent variable (Passer, 2014). According to Kellerstedt and Whitten (2013), the two key concepts of experiments are *control* and *randomisation*. The independent variables can be controlled, meaning they can be manipulated and then randomly assigned to different experimental or control conditions. Randomisation, also called random assignment entails that the probability of being assigned to a certain condition is exactly the same for each subject. By doing so, individual differences are unsystematically distributed across all conditions. The groups of subjects assigned to the different conditions become “identical”. Hence, the observed variations in the

dependent variable can be confidently attributed to the independent variables (Passer, 2014). Experiments are optimal for testing causality, as the considerable degree of control makes sure that the three following conditions are met: (1) Co-variation of X and Y, (2) temporal order, X proceeds Y and (3) absence of alternative explanations (Anderson & Edwards, 2014; Passer, 2014). In sum, controlled and randomised experiments are the *only* research design allowing for making inferences about causality (Passer, 2014).

Factorial design. Since this study examines the effects of three independent variables in a single experiment, a *factorial design*, defined as an experiment including two or more independent variables and in which all levels of each independent variable are combined with every level of the other independent variables was conducted (Passer, 2014). Our specific case constitutes a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial design (Table 3). Every subject gets assigned to only one of the eight conditions. Compared to within-subjects designs, these have the advantage of preventing order and carry-over effects. However, between-subjects designs require bigger sample sizes and they imply that the groups are not perfectly equivalent. Hence, there is more room for noise (Passer, 2014).

Table 3.
2 x 2 x 2 factorial design

	<u>C (c₁)</u>		<u>C (c₂)</u>	
	B (b ₁)	B (b ₂)	B (b ₁)	B (b ₂)
A (a ₁)	a ₁ b ₁ c ₁	a ₁ b ₂ c ₁	a ₁ b ₁ c ₂	a ₁ b ₂ c ₂
A (a ₂)	a ₂ b ₁ c ₁	a ₂ b ₂ c ₁	a ₂ b ₁ c ₂	a ₂ b ₂ c ₂

A = Gender (male/female)

B = Religion (Muslim/Christian)

C = Educational background (doctor/hair dresser)

By using a multifactorial design, we are able to test for *main-* as well as for two-way and three-way *interaction effects*. Compared to single factor experiments, including more factors within one experiment increases its real-life complexity (Passer, 2014). A special type of factorial designs are *multifactorial survey experiments*. Across social sciences, such as social/organisational psychology and the emerging behavioural

administration, this approach became increasingly popular to measure beliefs, intentions and/or attitudes (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010; Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). Since we focus on attitudes, the multifactorial survey method perfectly fits our study.

Vignettes are brief description of hypothetical, but realistic scenarios concerning individuals, objects or situations in which different independent variables are systematically manipulated (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010; Aginis & Bradley, 2014). The causal effect on the dependent variable is then assessed by survey questions (Aginis & Bradley, 2014). Not only do vignettes have high internal validity, but also high construct validity and reliability (Steiner & Atzmüller, 2016). Applied to our case, the two levels of our three independent variables (gender, religion, educational background), also called factors, are systematically combined within eight vignettes and their effect on the dependent variable, the attitude of local politicians, is captured by survey questions.

By combining the experimental method (vignette methodology) with traditional surveys, multifactorial survey experiments circumvent the trade-off between internal and external validity (Anderson & Edwards, 2014; Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). The high internal validity of the vignette experiment is complemented by the high external validity of the survey (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010). Already in 1996, Sniderman and Grob praised the combination of traditional survey and vignette experiments, especially regarding their different strengths in external and internal validity as “the innovational breakthroughs in the design of public opinion surveys” (378).

Another benefit of using the multifactorial survey method to measure attitudes of local politicians is countering *common method bias*, which is defined as systematic error variances falsely inflating or deflating the relationship between two measures (Jakobsen & Jensen 2015). According to George and Desmidt (2016) if a survey experiment makes use of perceptual items, such as vignettes, in order to investigate attitudes, interpretations or behavioural intentions, common method errors are rarely occurring.

After having explained our choice for the multifactorial survey experiment we are now proceeding to the empirical context.

Empirical setting

This study is conducted in the context of Flemish municipalities. Testing actual local legislators in a non-laboratory, political and economical homogeneous environment increases the realism of our study (George, Baekgaard Decramer, Audenaert & Goeminne, 2018). Given the fact that EU member states have considerable discretion in

migration and asylum policy matters and that discrimination against ethnic minorities is present in all areas of society, local legislators play a crucial role in migration and asylum matters. Moreover, shifting discrimination research's usual focus from managers and bureaucrats to politicians (Andriessen, et al., (2012); Beart et al., (2015); Giulietti, Vlassopoulos & Tonin; 2017) means generating new insights into the broader topic of racial discrimination, specifically against refugees from the Middle East. In addition, following a multidisciplinary approach and employing theories and concepts from different social science disciplines, such as psychology allows us to draw balanced and well-considered conclusions (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017). Using randomised survey experiments enables us to limit issues related to endogeneity and to draw causal inference (George et al., 2018). Furthermore, by including EU migration policy support as a moderator we exclude this as a potential confound and thus increase the validity of our research.

Finally, Belgium constitutes a suitable context for this research, since in 2015 it received 27,076 asylum applications, which is comparable to other member states (e.g. Germany received the same proportional number (AIDA country report Belgium, 2015; AIDA country report Germany, 2015)).

Subjects. A great benefit of this study is its sample. Whereas empirical research often uses convenience samples, such as undergraduate students (Anderson & Edwards, 2015) within our study actual Flemish local politicians are tested.

Since attitudes are one key determinant of behaviour, local legislators' attitudes are extremely important for political decision-making and consequently they have a direct impact on individual asylum seekers, their lives and their wellbeing. Hence, this research is highly relevant in the context of the current European migration situation. Furthermore, examining local politicians allows us to exclude confounding variables, as Flemish municipalities can be regarded as fairly homogeneous (George et al., 2018), since they "share common political and constitutional systems, experience common economic shocks, implement similar budgetary processes and have identical electoral rules" (Goeminne & Smolders, 2014:183).

Our final sample size consists of 933 local politicians, out of which 65% are men and 35% are women. The mean age is 54. Educational backgrounds range from no university degree (21.7%) to PhD (3.4%). The biggest proportion has a bachelors degree (40.6%). Working experience as politicians range from no experience to 55 years of experience. Since we are interested in the politicians' attitudes towards asylum seekers,

we asked for additional demographic information. Firstly, participants were asked for their self-perceived political orientation on the left-right spectrum on a scale from 0 to 10. It turned out that the majority placed themselves at the centre ($M = 5.35$). Secondly, we wanted to know whether they ever spent more than three months abroad. Only 12.9% did. Figure 5 displays the personal encounters with asylum seekers. Important to note is that 156 participants (16.8%) indicated never having met an asylum seeker personally.

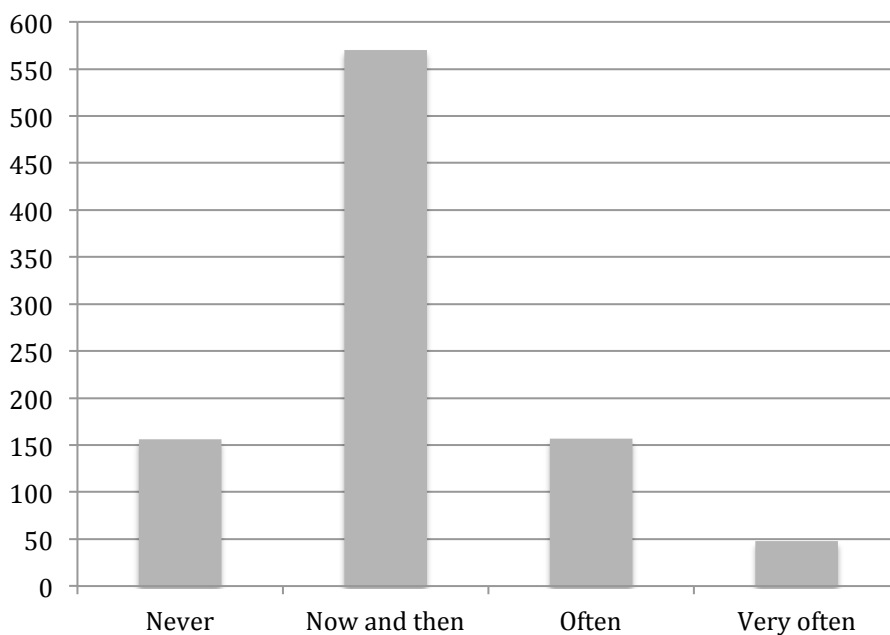


Figure 5. Perceived number of encounters with asylum seekers.

Data collection

Data was collected by sending the survey to the 9453 local politicians of all municipalities and Public Centres for Social Welfare (OCMW) via email. Because the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679 came into force on May 25, 2018, which implies that the data base of the Flemish local politicians must not be shared with third persons, this survey experiment was incorporated into the research of Dr Bert George, Assistant Professor at Erasmus University Rotterdam and University of Gent, on discrimination in public organisations. After we constructed the survey experiment, Dr Bert George translated it into Dutch, put it together with his own survey experiment, piloted both and finally distributed it to all municipalities via email. Due to

the tight IMP master thesis schedule, our experiment was placed before Dr Bert George's experiment in order to ensure a sufficiently high response rate in cases where only one part of the experiment will be completed. The emails contained a link leading to the survey experiment online. In total, two reminders were sent. Completing the experiment took approximately six minutes.

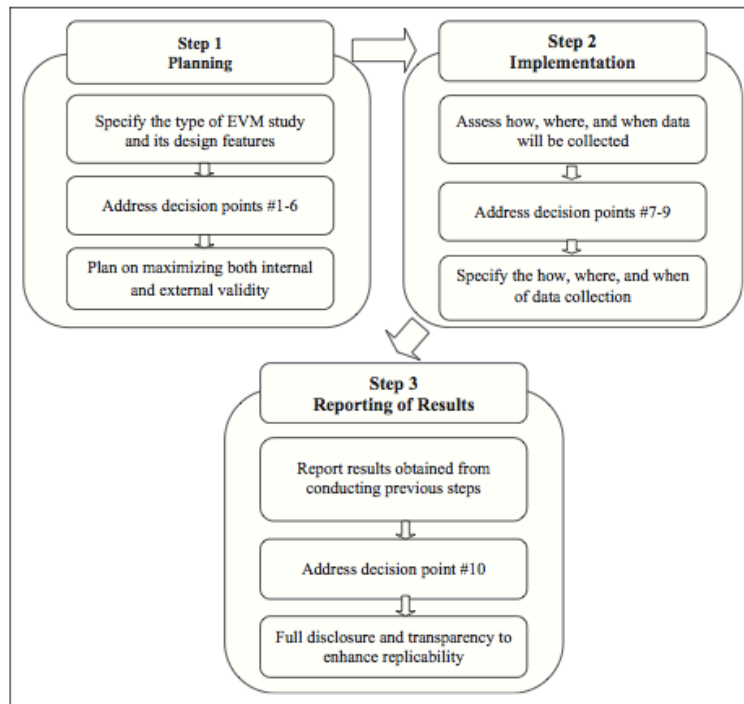
By combining two studies into one survey experiment and the mails being sent out by Dr Bert George, who already worked together with the Flemish municipalities, the studies response rate was assumed to be high. The data collection was started on May 17, 2018 and finished on June 4, 2018. The final response rate is approximately 10%.

Best practice recommendations. This study was constructed alongside the best practice recommendations for experimental vignette methodology given by Aginuis and Bradley (2014). Ten guiding lines regarding planning, implementing and reporting findings are proposed. First, we had to decide whether the experimental vignette methodology is the right approach for our research question. Since we investigated the causal relationship between refugees' demographics and politicians' attitudes towards them, and additionally had in mind that ethnical discrimination is a sensitive topic, which can be difficult to be approached in another ethical manner, the vignette methodology fitted our research purpose. Second, we had to decide between the paper people type and the policy capturing type. As we were interested in "explicit responses to hypothetical scenarios [...] explicit processes and outcomes - those about which participants are aware and on which they can provide information" (Aginuis & Bradley, 2014:359), in our case attitudes, we had to go with the paper people studies type. Third, we chose a between-subjects design (elaborated on earlier). According to Anginus and Bradley (2014), this design is rather uncommon because participants do not have any comparison on which they can contextually base their responses. Thus, it is essential to provide contextual information, which we do by adding a small information block on the "EU migration crisis" to the vignettes. Fourth, in order to counteract the valid criticism of vignettes studies being unrealistic and results not being generalizable (low external validity) and only showing that certain results occur within specific experimental situations, we had to provide a high level of immersion. We did that by phrasing the vignettes as realistically as possible and by adding survey questions focused on the participant's municipality. Fifth, the number of variables and levels had to be determined. As stated in Shepherd and Zacharakis (1999) identifying variables critical to the decision, behaviour or attitude of concern is essential. By having performed a

multidisciplinary literature review on discrimination against minorities we identified relevant theories and learnt that gender, religion and educational background are key variables. This step was important since it prevents model misspecification. Agninius and Barley (2014) recommend choosing one of the two approaches offered by Shepherd and Zacharakis (1999) *the attribute-driven approach* or the *actual-driven approach*. We followed the first one, as data were collected by conducting an experiment rather than by deriving data from actual cases. Furthermore, our independent variables are orthogonal to another, meaning they are not correlated. This has the benefit of being able to better investigate independent effects of each variable (Agninius & Barley, 2014). In a sixth step, the number of vignettes had to be determined. In our case this step was redundant since the number of variables and their levels determine the number of vignettes. Three independent variables, each having two levels, resulted into eight vignettes. Worth mentioning here is that the between-subjects designs prevent information overload for the participants.

The following three steps concern the implementation, namely the sample choice, the experimental setting and the statistical analysis. In an optimal case the sample and the setting should contribute to a high external validity and realism. Surveying actual local Flemish politicians, who are likely to complete the survey experiment in their natural work environment, fulfils both criteria. Ninth, we had to choose a suitable statistical test. For between-subjects designs ANOVAs are chosen frequently. However, since units of our sample are clustered at municipality level, we chose a random effects modelling with clustered robust standard errors.

As a final step, it is recommended to report the methodology and findings as detailed and transparent as possible. A rule of thumb is to report on method and results at the level of detail that other researchers can easily replicate the study. We adhered to this recommendation, among other steps, by making our vignettes available (Table 6). Figure 6 presents an overview about all ten steps we followed.



Source: Aguinis, H., & Bradley, K. J. (2014). Best practice recommendations for designing and implementing experimental vignette methodology studies. *Organizational Research Methods*, 17, 351-371

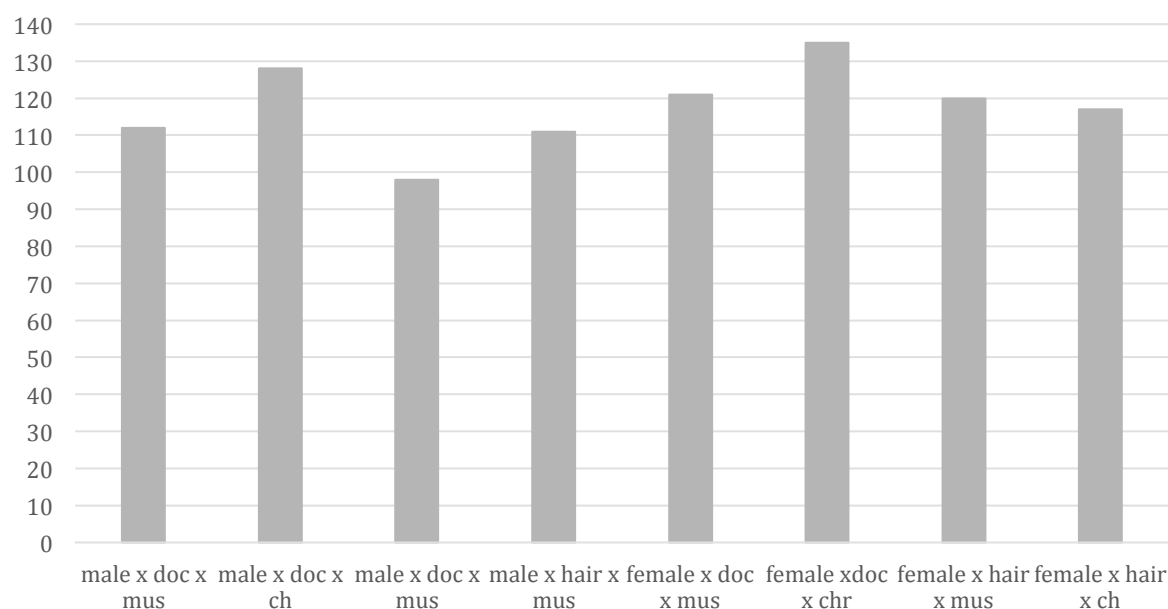
Figure 6. Conducting an experimental vignette methodology study - ten steps.

Moreover, further guidelines were consulted, for instance the public administration scholarship survey recommendations (Lee et al., 2012; Podsakoff MacKenzie & Podsakoff; 2012) as cited in George et al., 2018). Among other things, it recommends piloting the survey experiments, labelling response options and highlighting different items, presenting vignettes and the survey questions after one another on different pages, and guaranteeing anonymity. After having outlined an overview over the data collection procedure we will now take a closer look at the randomisation.

Randomisation. As already mentioned above, next to control, randomisation is a key feature of experiments. Randomisation includes two different procedures, namely *random sampling* and *random assignment*. In the context of our study random sampling, referring to the equal probability of each member in the population to be chosen for participating in the study by drawing a random sample, is not relevant. In contrast, random assignment determines which condition is assigned to each participant. Since our sample is not perfectly homogeneous and different individual factors, such as

participants' age, gender and physical condition could exercise an influence on the dependent variable, random assignment ensures that these differences are unsystematically distributed across the groups and hence, we can assume having equal groups across all eight conditions (Passer, 2014). Moreover, it can be assumed that potential confounds, not directly related to the dependent variable are balanced out if the sample size is big enough (Harris, 2002). Therefore, because of our big sample size alongside the randomisation procedure we control for confounding variables.

For the randomisation we used the online software package *Qualtrix*. The programme has various functions, one of them being automatic, random distribution. While the information block, as well as the survey questions and closing questions blocks are exactly the same for all participants, only the experimental blocks (the vignettes) are randomly assigned. Each participant receives only one vignette and Qualtrix makes sure that all eight vignettes will be received by approximately the same amount of people (Figure 7). The randomised survey procedure is visualised by Figure 8.



Legend: Doc = doctor, mus = Muslim, ch = Christian

Figure 7. The eight experimental groups.

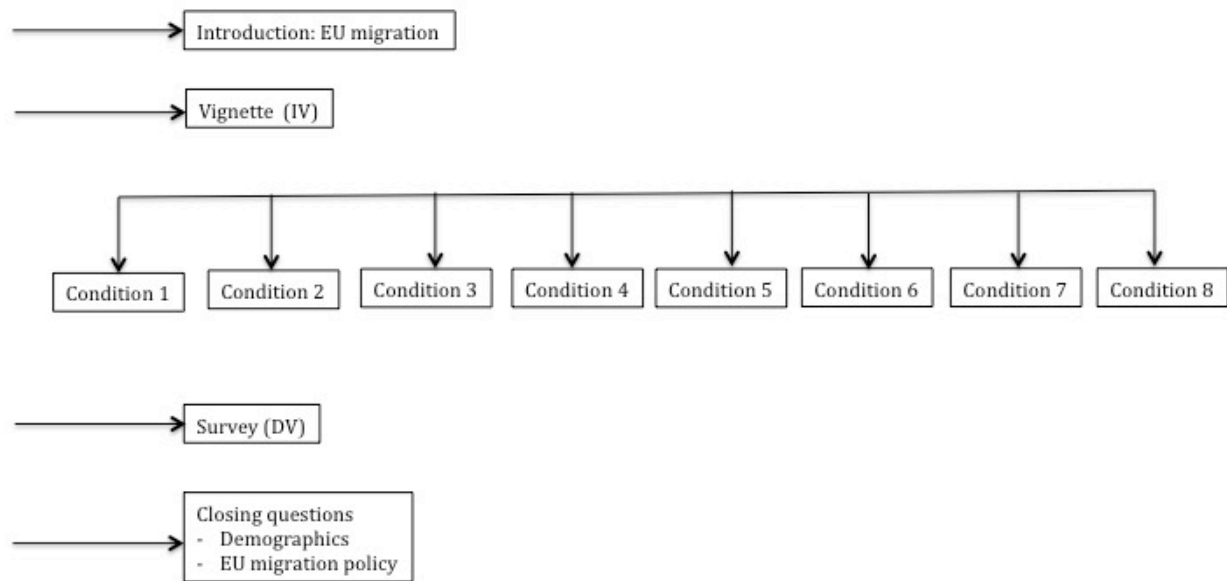


Figure 8. Survey design

Independent variable

The vignettes were designed following a three-stage process. First, based on the findings from our literature review we identified three independent variables influencing discriminating attitudes, namely gender, religion and educational background (Beart & Pauw, 2014; Zschirnt & Ruedin, 2016; Bleich, 2009; Veenstra, 2013). Table 4 shows all three independent variables and their two levels. Second, short hypothetical, realistic scenarios about a Syrian refugee, seeking asylum in Europe were formulated. Like Czymara and Schmidt-Catran (2017:744), we did not explicitly label any of the characters in the vignettes “refugees” or “asylum seekers” in order to prevent being too suggestive. Third, a pilot was performed. The survey experiment was pre-tested by a convenience sample, including academic and practitioner committee of public management professors and retired local politicians provided feedback on coherence.

Table 4
Independent variables vignettes

Variable	Levels	
Gender	2	Male/Female
Religion	2	Muslims/Christian
Education	2	Academic/Non-academic

All levels of the independent variables are systematically combined in every possible way resulting into eight different combinations, and hence into eight different experimental conditions. Table 5 provides an overview of the experiment with all eight different combinations of the independent variables.

Table 5
Experiment overview

Experimental condition	Type of demographics (IV)	Survey on attitudes (DV)
Condition 1	Male + academic + Muslim	✓
Condition 2	Male + academic + Christian	✓
Condition 3	Male + non-academic + Muslim +	✓
Condition 4	Male + non-academic + Christian	✓
Condition 5	Female + academic + Muslim	✓
Condition 6	Female + academic + Christian	✓
Condition 7	Female + non-academic + Muslim	✓
Condition 8	Female + non-academic + Christian	✓

Table 6
Experimental vignettes

Condition 1 Male x doctor x Muslim	Condition 2 Male x doctor x Christian	Condition 3 Male x hairdresser x Muslim	Condition 4 Male x hairdresser x Christian
Ahmed is 29 years old. He fled Syria and after a long and dangerous journey over land and sea, he finally arrived in Lesvos, Greece. In his hometown (Aleppo) Ahmed worked as a doctor and used to go to the mosque regularly. His preferred final destination is Belgium.	Ahmed is 29 years old. He fled Syria and after a long and dangerous journey over land and sea, he finally arrived in Lesvos, Greece. In his hometown (Aleppo) Ahmed worked as a doctor and used to go to the church regularly.	Ahmed is 29 years old. He fled Syria and after a long and dangerous journey over land and sea, he finally arrived in Lesvos, Greece. In his hometown (Aleppo) Ahmed worked as a hairdresser and used to go to the mosque regularly.	Ahmed is 29 years old. He fled Syria and after a long and dangerous journey over land and sea, he finally arrived in Lesvos, Greece. In his hometown (Aleppo) Ahmed worked as a hairdresser and used to go to the church regularly.
Condition 5 Female x doctor x Muslim	Condition 6 Female x doctor x Christian	Condition 7 Female x hairdresser x Muslim	Condition 8 Female x hairdresser x Christian
Fathima is 29 years old. She fled Syria and after long and dangerous journey over land and sea, she finally arrived in Lesvos, Greece. In her hometown (Aleppo) Fathima worked as a doctor and used to go to the mosque regularly.	Fathima is 29 years old. She fled Syria and after long and dangerous journey over land and sea, she finally arrived in Lesvos, Greece. In her hometown (Aleppo) Fathima worked as a doctor and used to go to the church regularly.	Fathima is 29 years old. She fled Syria and after long and dangerous journey over land and sea, she finally arrived in Lesvos, Greece. In her hometown (Aleppo) Fathima worked as a hairdresser and used to go to the mosque regularly.	Fathima is 29 years old. She fled Syria and after long and dangerous journey over land and sea, she finally arrived in Lesvos, Greece. In her hometown (Aleppo) Fathima worked as a hairdresser and used to go to the church regularly.

Dependent variable

Attitudes held by local Flemish politicians towards refugees or asylum seekers is the dependent variable of our study. Attitudes are a well-researched psychological concept. Being the affective component in shaping intentions, attitudes also have a considerable influence on behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Since migration and asylum are highly emotional, ethically sensitive and polarising topics placed on top of the political agenda in most European municipalities, attitudes are a key factor in asylum and migration decision-making.

In our study, attitudes are measured through four survey questions, which we designed based on Angermeyer and Matschinger's (2003) scale of emotional reactions

(pro-social reactions, fear, anger) to mentally ill people. Both, mentally ill people and refugees are perceived as out-groups (Link & Phelan, 2001; van der Linden & Jacobs, 2016) hence, emotional reactions towards them are comparable. Table 7 presents the survey questions. These four questions lead to four variables (1) Protection, (2) Asylum Belgium, (3) Asylum Municipality, and (4) Threat. All variables were assessed on a scale from 0 to 10. In Table 8 the descriptives are presented. Interestingly, the more specific the questions became, the more often respondents omitted them. Whereas all 933 participants answered to whether the described person is in need of protection, only 895 indicated whether asylum in ones respective municipality should be provided. Overall, participants think that regardless of specific demographic characteristics the described person needs protection ($M = 7.161$) and should be granted asylum in Belgium and in the respective municipality ($M = 6.416$; 6.277).

Table 7
Survey questions

Dependent variable	Accessing question
Protection	1. Do you think the person in the description is in need of protection?
Asylum in Belgium	2. Do you think the person in the description should be granted asylum in Belgium?
Asylum in municipality	3. Do you think your own municipality should implement local policies benefitting this specific person?
Threat	4. Do you think the person in the description could become a security threat to your municipality?

Table 8
Descriptives dependent variables

		Protection	Asylum_BEL	Asylum_Munic	Threat
N	Valid	933	897	895	822
	Missing	0	36	38	111
Mean		7.161	6.416	6.277	2.436
Std. Deviation		2.393	2.74	2.886	2.5
Minimum		0	0	0	0
Maximum		10	10	10	10

Moderators

We included the moderator EU asylum and migration policy support by asking the subjects the following question: “*Do you support the common EU asylum and migration policy?*” By looking at Table 9, we see that average support was medium ($M= 2.53$)

Table 9

Descriptives moderator variables

		Support
N	Valid	929
	Missing	4
Mean		2.53
Std. Deviation		.638
Minimum		1
Maximum		4

Statistical analysis

In order to answer the empirical research question on whether the theoretical relationship between demographic characteristics, support of common EU migration policy and discrimination by politicians hold in the case of local politicians’ attitudes towards asylum seekers, a linear regression, more specifically a random effects modelling with clustered robust standard errors was performed in *Stata*.

Validity and reliability

The ultimate purpose of empirical research is making inferences. Therefore, it is crucial to discuss two key concepts: *validity* and *reliability*.

Generally, validity addresses four types of inferences: (1) inferences about constructs, (2) statistical inferences, (3) causal inferences, and (4) inferences about generalizability (Passer, 2014). The first describes whether the studied constructs (the variables) indeed measure what they claim to measure. The second refers to whether conclusions about significant relations between the independent and dependent variables are drawn based on proper statistical analyses. “[...] highly contextualized vignettes increase the construct validity, the degree to which the vignettes measure what we intend to measure” (Steiner, Atzmüller & Su, 2016:54). By having explained the

vignette construction in a detailed and transparent way (see data collection) and by making them highly contextualised we are confident that our study has high construct validity. Within this section we will mainly focus on causal inferences, hence *internal validity* and generalizability, hence *external validity*. In general, whereas experiments have a high internal but low external validity, surveys have a low internal but high external validity (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014).

Internal validity. Important to note is that construct and statistical validity are necessary conditions for internal validity. When talking about internal validity, scholars refer to the extent to which it can be assumed that an experiment demonstrates that variable X has a causal effect on variable Y (Passer, 2014). In our experimental context internal validity concerns the inferences about the causal relationship between the manipulated vignette stimuli (X), whether the described asylum seeker is *male or female, a doctor or a hairdresser, a Muslim or Christian* and the respondents' reaction (Y), the politicians' answers to the four survey questions (Steiner, Atzmüller & Su, 2016). Internal validity is considered high if alternative, confounding explanations can be excluded due to the employment of an accurate experimental research design (Passer, 2014). Generally, vignette studies score high on internal validity, as it allows for manipulation of the independent variable and randomisation. Furthermore, we included EU migration policy support as a moderator in order to exclude it as a major potential confound.

External validity. External validity is defined as the degree to which findings can be generalised beyond the experimental context. Scholars frequently distinguish between generalizability *across populations* and *across settings* (Passer, 2014). For instance, do refugees' demographics, such as gender, educational background and religion influence attitudes of local Flemish politicians and people who are not involved in politics, such as doctors? Do refugees' demographics influence attitudes of politicians' in Flemish and also in German or Dutch municipalities? As the external validity of vignettes is rather low, they are usually accompanied by surveys. Thus, findings can (at least) be generalised to the survey's target population (Steiner, Atzmüller & Su, 2016). Working with actual local politicians as a sample, instead of using student samples, greatly enhances the external validity and the realism of this study (Anderson & Edwards, 2014).

External validity is closely related to the concept of *realism*, which is subdivided into *mundane realism* and *experimental realism*. The first refers to the degree responses

obtained in an experimental setting approximate real behaviour in natural settings (Passer, 2014; Anderson & Edwards, 2014). The second describes the degree to which subjects perceive the experiment as realistic and psychologically involving. This way the probability of natural behaviour opposed to self-monitoring and consequently distorting responses is increased (Passer, 2014; Anderson & Edwards, 2014). Survey experiments usually score high on experimental realism, but lower on mundane realism. However, by phrasing the vignette texts realistically, by letting the subjects participate in their natural work environment and by ensuring anonymity this study's realism can be considered as quite high.

In sum, a survey experiment is a great way to address the trade-off between internally valid knowledge produced by experimental vignettes and externally valid knowledge gained through surveys (Anderson & Edwards, 2014).

Reliability. Reliability describes a study's ability to ensure consistency of measurements and control for biases resulting from measurement error, experimental error or sampling error (Passer, 2014; Steiner, Atzmüller & Su, 2016; Lee, Benoit-Bryan & Johnson, 2011). This means that if the same vignette is presented repeatedly to the same subject under equivalent conditions the outcome should be the same every time.

Chapter 5: Results

Within chapter 5 we will present the results of our survey experiment before we move on to interpreting them in chapter 6. This chapter is dedicated to answering the empirical sub-question:

“Does the theoretical relationship between demographic characteristics of asylum seekers, support of common EU asylum and migration policy and discrimination by politicians hold, in the case of local politicians’ attitudes towards refugees/asylum seekers and EU asylum and migration policy?”

Accordingly, our four hypotheses need to be tested.

1. If the asylum seeker is male, attitudes of local politicians will be more negative.
2. If the asylum seeker has no academic background, the attitude of local politicians will be more negative.
3. If an asylum seeker is Muslim, the attitude of local politicians will be more negative.
4. The lower the support for EU asylum and migration policy, the more negative the attitude towards asylum seekers who are male, Muslim and have a no-academic background.

In order to test the four hypotheses a linear regression has been performed. Since in our case, one assumption of regression analysis, namely that all units are independent of each other (Field, 2013), does not hold true, we had to run a *random effects modelling with clustered robust standard errors* at the municipality level in Stata, as politicians within the same municipality are not independent, but nested (Gerorge et al., 2018).

Demographics (gender, educational background, religion) and attitudes

A preliminary analysis of the data revealed that attitudes vary depending on what demographics a person described in the vignette possesses. Table 10 displays the results of testing the first three hypotheses. As presented in Table 10, a significant direct effect of gender was found. This means that if the described person was male, participants indicated the need for protection as being smaller. However, gender did not

significantly influence participants' perception of having the right to asylum, either in Belgium as a whole or in the respective municipality. Nevertheless, male refugees were more often perceived as a security threat than female refugees. In sum, these results partially confirm hypothesis 1. Attitudes are more negative towards male asylum seekers, in respect to the need of protection and the perceived threat; however, regarding perceived legitimacy of asylum, attitudes do not differ towards male or female asylum seekers.

Secondly, we predicted that attitudes towards asylum seekers with a lower educational background (non-academic) are more negative compared to asylum seekers with a higher educational background (academic). Whereas asylum seekers with a high educational background were described as being doctors, asylum seekers with a lower educational background were described as hairdressers. The results show significant effects of educational background; in our case being a hairdresser instead of a doctor, on the need of protection, asylum in Belgium and asylum in someone's municipality (Table 10). However, perceived threat was not affected by educational background. Again, hypothesis 2 was partially confirmed.

Thirdly, it was expected that attitudes are more negative if the described person is a Muslim. For all four dependent variables this holds true (Table 10). In comparison to Christians, participants significantly indicated that if a person is described as being Muslim, he/she is in less need of protection, claims for asylum are less legitimate and they are perceived as more threatening. This means hypothesis 3 is fully confirmed.

In sum, our results confirm hypothesis 1 and 2 partially and hypothesis 3 fully. Attitudes by local Flemish politicians are more negative towards, male, Muslim and lower educated asylum seekers from Syria.

Table 10
Effects of gender, educational background and religion on attitudes

	<u>Protect</u>			<u>Asyl_Bel</u>			<u>Asyl_Mun</u>			<u>Threat</u>		
	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE	Coef	p	SE
_cons	7.704	.000**	.156	7.025	.000**	.176	6.859	.000**	.184	2.037	.000**	.159
Male	-.397	.008*	.15	-.257	.135*	.171	-.218	.213*	.174	.580	.001**	.17
Hairdresser	-.411	.009*	.1560	-.66	.001**	.193	-.73	.000**	.203	-.092	.589	.170
Muslim	-.328	.043*	.161	-.354	.064*	.191	-.266	.191*	.203	.328	.079*	.186
F	5.28*			5.67**			5.24*			5.36*		
R ²	.019			.021			.02			.018		
N	933			897			895			822		

** $p < .001$

* $p < .05$

Moderating effects of EU asylum and migration policy support

After having reported on direct effects of demographics on attitudes and hence, having investigated hypotheses 1-3, we now look into the moderating role of EU asylum and migration policy support. We decided to only include the support of EU asylum and migration policy variable into four additional linear regression models. The results are presented in Tables 11-13. Whereas participants' support for EU asylum and migration policy does not significantly influence the perceived need of protection and legitimacy of asylum claims in case the described person was male, it did influence threat perception. Although participants scoring high on support of EU migration policy still perceive men as more threatening than females, this effect becomes significantly smaller compared to participants scoring low on support (Table 14). Furthermore, against our expectations support for EU migration policy did not significantly affect the attitudes towards asylum seekers in case they were described as being Muslim or non-academic on any of the four dimensions of the depend variable (protection, asylum Belgium, asylum municipality, threat).

In sum, hypothesis 4 was partially confirmed. Attitudes of participants supporting the common EU migration policy are more positive, regarding the perceived threatening potential of male asylum seekers compared to participants supporting the EU migration policy support less.

Table 11
Moderating effects of support on perceived need of protection

Protect	Coef.	Robust std error	t	p	Conf Interval	
Man	-.375	.78	-.48	.631	-1.910	1.160
Hairdresser	.105	.749	.14	.889	-1.37	1.58
Muslim	-.563	.745	-.76	.450	-2.029	.903
Support	.454	.258	1.76	.080	-.054	.962
Support_male	-.002	.288	-.01	.994	-.57	.565
Support_muslim	.092	.27	.34	.734	-.44	.623
Support_hair	-.219	.274	-.80	.426	-.758	.321
_cons	6.573	.718	9.16	.000**	5.160	7.986
F	4.30**					
R²	.031					
N	929					

** $p < .001$

* $p < .05$

Table 12*Moderating effects of support on perceived legitimacy of asylum in Belgium*

Protect	Coef.	Robust std error	t	p	Conf Interval	
Man	-1.128	.89	-1.27	.631	-2.88	.624
Hairdresser	-.691	.881	-.78	.434	-2.424	1.043
Muslim	.018	.959	.02	.985	-1.871	1.907
Support	.506	.282	1.80	.074	-.049	1.062
Support_male	.346	.325	1.07	.287	-.293	.986
Support_muslim	-.142	.345	-.41	.680	-.821	.537
Support_hair	-.012	.321	-.04	.971	-.758	.321
_cons	5.757	.803	7.17	.000**	4.177	7.337
F	6.04**					
R²	.041					
N	893					

** $p < .001$ * $p < .05$ **Table 13***Moderating effects of support on perceived legitimacy of asylum in municipality*

Protect	Coef.	Robust std error	t	p	Conf Interval	
Man	-.922	.919	-1.00	0.317	-2.731	.887
Hairdresser	-.321	.948	-0.34	0.735	-2.187	1.546
Muslim	-.017	1.032	-0.02	0.067	-2.049	2.015
Support	.566	.308	1.84	0.403	-.040	1.173
Support_male	.282	.337	0.84	0.800	-.381	.946
Support_muslim	-.094	.371	-0.25	0.680	-.825	.637
Support_hair	-.181	.343	-0.53	0.599	-.856	.495
_cons	5.436	.882	6.16	0.000**	3.7	7.172
F	5.72**					
R²	.036					
N	891					

** $p < .001$ * $p < .05$

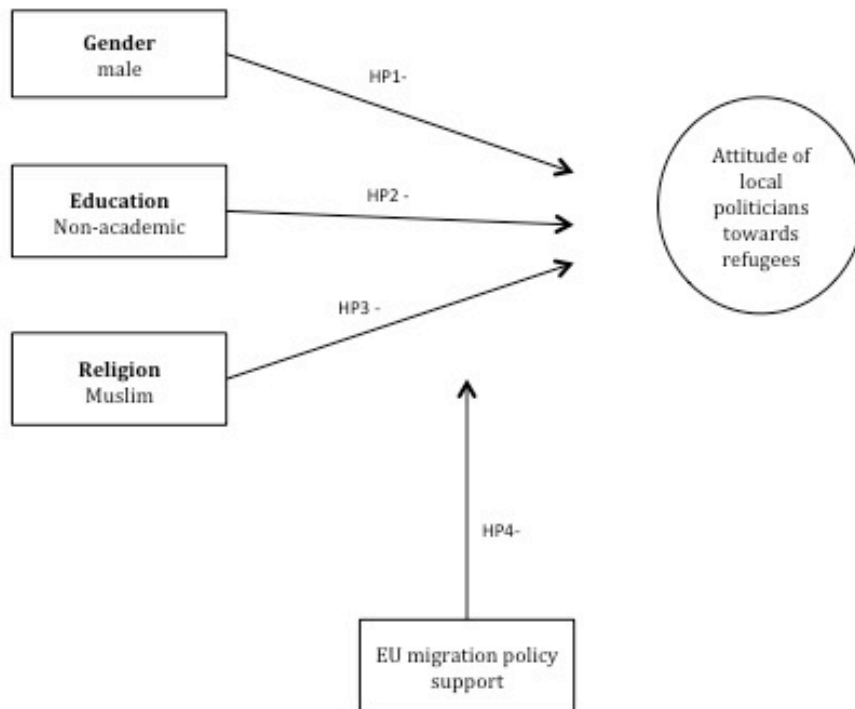
Table 14
Moderating effects of support on perceived threat

Protect	Coef.	Robust std error	t	p	Conf Interval	
Man	1.995	.792	2.52	0.012*	.436	3.554
Hairdresser	-.42	.795	-0.53	0.598	-1.985	1.146
Muslim	1.516	.816	1.86	0.064	-.09	3.122
Support	-.008	.248	-0.03	0.973	-.497	.480
Support_male	-.565	.299	-1.89	0.059	-1.153	.023
Support_muslim	-.472	.295	-1.60	0.111	-1.052	.109
Support_hair	.153	.294	0.52	0.603	-.426	.733
_cons	2.03	.669	3.03	0.003*	.709	3.343
F	3.49**					
R²	.039					
N	819					

** $p < .001$

* $p < .05$

All in all, our data collected through the multifactorial survey experiment and analysed by running a random effects modelling with clustered robust standard errors in Stata, provide at least partially confirmation for all our four hypotheses (Figure 9).



Solid arrow: HP fully confirmed
Dotted arrow: HP partially confirmed

Figure 9. Visualised results for each hypothesis.

All three core variables exert an influence on attitudes held by local Flemish politicians. Attitudes towards male, Muslim and non-academic asylum seekers, regarding the perceived need of protection, legitimacy of asylum claims and threat perception were more negative. Hence, gender, religion and educational background are crucial variables to consider in the broader context of discrimination against migrants and asylum seekers, and especially in policy making and implementation processes.

After all, we can give a positive answer to our empirical sub-question. Indeed, *the theoretical relationship between demographic characteristics of asylum seekers, support of common EU asylum and migration policy and discrimination by politicians holds true, in the case of local politicians' attitudes towards asylum seekers and EU asylum and migration policy.*

Chapter 6: Discussion & Conclusion

This chapter discusses, interprets and integrates the results of our survey experiment, regarding four hypotheses and the general research question. Following from that, we will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our research, reflect on the explanatory power of discrimination theories identified by economics, psychology and sociology research, mention limitations of this study and finally provide recommendations for future research avenues.

We aimed at investigating the influence certain demographics of asylum seekers have on the attitudes held by local Flemish politicians towards asylum seekers. Moreover, we tested the moderating role of the factor common EU asylum and migration policy support on this *demographic – attitude relation*. The introduction on international migration was followed by a multidisciplinary literature review on the broader topic of discrimination against minorities, based on which we identified relevant economic, psychological and sociological theories and from which we later derived four theory-based hypotheses. Investigating our hypotheses by conducting a randomised survey experiment, testing 935 actual local Flemish politicians, enabled us to draw causal inferences of the influence of demographic characteristics, such as being male, Muslim and non-academic, on local legislators' attitudes towards asylum seekers. Based on the significant findings of our experiment, but simultaneously being aware that we only tested attitudes not actual behaviour we feel confident to make statements on potential discrimination against asylum seekers in the context of Flemish municipalities.

The main results of the experiment show that local Flemish legislators perceive, everything else being equal, young men fleeing from Syria as being less in need of protection than women. Participants stated that men's claim for asylum in Belgium and respective Flemish municipalities is less legitimate compared to the female counterparts. Furthermore, Muslims and non-academics (hairdressers) were perceived as being less in need of protection and asylum in Flanders in comparison to Christians and academics (doctors). As expected, men and Muslims were perceived as more threatening.

Up till this point we can answer parts of our overall research question (*"What is the relationship between (1) demographic characteristics of asylum seekers, (2) support for EU migration policy and (3) attitudes towards asylum seekers among local Flemish politicians?"*). Demographic characteristics of asylum seekers, such as being male,

Muslim and non-academic exert a negative influence on attitudes held by Flemish local politicians towards asylum seekers. In order to interpret the role of common EU asylum and migration policy support, we have to dive into a more detailed discussion of the findings. Since the competences concerning migration policy are not clear cut, meaning that although migration has been moved under the AFSJ, member states still have considerable discretion, we incorporated EU asylum and migration policy support as a potential moderator into our regression model. This allows for drawing more nuanced conclusions about the demographic – attitude relationship.

Whereas participants' support for EU asylum and migration policy does not significantly influence the perceived need of protection and legitimacy of asylum claims in case the described person was male, Muslim or non-academic, it did influence threat perception. Participants scoring high on support of EU migration policy did not perceive men as more threatening than women. Generally speaking, the Europeanisation of asylum and migration policy contributed to the liberalisation of asylum policy, by setting minimum standards and hence, countering a race to the bottom of national asylum systems (Bonjour, Servant & Thilemann, 2017). Compared to many member states, the EU institutions, especially the Commission and the European Parliament always took rather refugee-friendly stances. Contrary, some member states, especially in the light of the current crisis, took unilateral measures. For instance they introduced Schengen border controls, with the intention to keep people outside due to security concerns. Interestingly, looking at how politicians present the current refugee situation, we realise that the right-centre parties predominantly frame it as a security crisis. Moreover, some right-wing governments (e.g. Austria or Hungary) keep on blocking common EU approaches or advocating for increasing national competences in migration matters (Gianfreda, 2017). Discussing whether security concerns authentically constitute the primary intentions behind the intergovernmentalist behaviour will be left out in this paper. Our results are in line with this notion. Local politicians who highly support a common European approach might be less likely to see the situation as a major security crisis and might have a more balanced and realistic view on the threat potential of refugees.

In sum, the results of our survey experiment point towards discriminatory tendencies towards male, Muslim and non-academic asylum seekers in Flemish municipalities. This could have implications, such as limited provision of social services by a municipality or at least a less warm and welcoming atmosphere. Important to note,

we only examined the perceived need of protection, threat potential, and asylum claim legitimacy for Syrians. Hence, we cannot make any statement on how reactions would look like towards people fleeing from other Middle East countries, such as Afghanistan, Iraq or African countries, such as Congo, Eritrea or Mali. However, given that Syrians “enjoy” a special status, for instance they are the only nationality considered in the resettlement scheme in the EU-Turkey Statement, it is not far fetched to assume that reactions towards people from other countries of origin would be less positive.

Theoretical implications

Our study contributes to the academic discourse on discrimination against minorities. To our knowledge, this study is the first experimentally researching discrimination against, not simply ethnic minorities, but asylum seekers and refugees in Europe. Understanding attitudes towards forcefully displaced people is complex and requires a multifaceted approach. For this reason we borrowed theories and concepts from economics, psychology and sociology. How well these concepts contribute to the interpretation of our results needs to be discussed.

Since many results turned out to be statistically significant and our hypotheses could be all, at least partially confirmed, we can say that behavioural public administration provided a suitable theoretical framework for our study. Conducting a multifactorial survey experiment in the public sector (all Flemish municipalities) enabled us to conclude that demographics, such as being male, Muslim and non-academic have a negative impact on local legislators’ attitudes. An often-mentioned downside of vignette studies is that the total vignette population easily increases beyond the manageable. This complicates the experiment. “The usefulness of such large vignette populations is questionable because the confounding of effects necessarily increases as the size of the vignette population increases and the portion of actually sampled vignettes decreases” (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2017:136). Fortunately, in our case relevant factors could be limited to three with two levels, resulting in a vignette population of eight; therefore, choosing a multifactorial survey experiment was an appropriate choice. Finally, by using behavioural public administration methodology as graduate students, we followed Grimmelikhuijsen et al.’s, (2016:54) call for fostering the behavioural approach to public administration and thereby contributed to making it a “sustainable endeavour”.

More specifically, we based our study on a specific theory of behavioural public administration, namely representative bureaucracy. Previous research on representative bureaucracy has shown that bureaucrats better represent the needs of the citizens and implement beneficial policies accordingly if they share demographic characteristics with them (e.g. Butler & Broockman, 2011; Riccucci, Van Ryzin, and Li 2016). This implies passive representation (same demographics) and active representation (implementing policies) are linked. As mentioned before, this link is heavily influenced by representatives' attitudes towards (1) certain groups of citizens and (2) certain policies. In the context of our study that means that attitudes held by local Flemish legislators towards asylum seekers and/or towards the common EU migration policy can influence the decision making on how asylum policies are implemented. Hence, local representatives perceiving male, Muslim or non-academic asylum seekers as being less in need of protection and more dangerous and therefore, might be discriminatory in implementing policies affecting asylum seekers. Among many others, consequences could be restricted access to social services, benefits as well as public spaces (e.g. German charity Tafel denied single foreign men access to free food), racial profiling, tighter asylum legislations, decreasing recognition rates or veil bans in public spaces (Washington Post, 2018/2/27; Toshkov & de Haan, 2013). However, according to Anderson and Ferguson (2018) the link between passive and active representation depends on the representatives' level of discretion. In sum, given local legislators have certain discretion over migration policy and since attitudes influence policy implementation, the results of the study are highly relevant. Acknowledging our results fit the notion of discriminatory practices being present in public organisations, such as local municipalities, we agree with Giulietti et al., (2017), in stating that discrimination in public administrations is especially alarming, since governments should adhere to own made legislations and lead by good example.

Interpreted through the lens of representative bureaucracy, this study's findings suggest that attitudes of local politicians play a crucial role in structural discrimination against asylum seekers. In the following we will reflect on how well economics, psychology and sociology explain the discriminatory attitudes towards male, Muslim non-academic asylum seekers by Flemish local legislators.

This study is not able to determine whether local politicians' attitudes result from economic discrimination, more specifically from taste-based discrimination, statistical discrimination or rather a combination of both. However, measuring which underlying

mechanism is dominant would be important, since both have distinct practical implications, as they need to be addressed differently (Andriessen, et al., 2012). Therefore, future research is needed for detangling the exact underlying mechanisms, by for example doing an Implicit Association Test (IAT). Moreover, from an economic perspective, discriminatory attitudes leading to discriminatory behaviour against minorities is costly (Baert, Cockx, Gheyle, & Van Damme, 2015). In the context of Flanders this would not only imply a loss in the European normative human rights status, but also, considering the ageing population, potentially a loss in future working force and contributions to pension funds.

Again, we cannot make any inferences on the dominance of one of the two discriminatory mechanisms; however, Zschirnt and Ruedin (2016) argue that previous research indicates that taste-based discrimination is more prevalent than statistical discrimination. Assuming negative attitudes of our participants were indeed resulting from taste-based discrimination, this would mean that local politicians have stereotypes against men, Muslims and non-academic asylum seekers. Stereotyping occurs more easily depending on the salience of a category (Devine 1989). Since gender and religion are two highly salient categories it appears reasonable that participants stereotype accordingly. This argument is supported by the fact that most participants indicated having had few personal encounters with refugees that could have disproved their stereotypes. Therefore, it is legitimate to assume that the media heavily determined participants' attitudes. In addition, the more uniform and repetitive news reporting is, the more likely it is to be internalised and automatized (van der Linden & Jacobs, 2017). Given the high media coverage and political framing of asylum seekers being economic migrants and security threats, a "window of ideological opportunity" according to Vollmer and Karakayali (2017:133), together with global events related to Islamic terrorism, the results of our experiment are not surprising. Finally, considering the findings of van der Linden and Jacobs (2017) that media reports focusing on security and cultural issues related to migration constitute as a significant contributor to increased intergroup threat perception, might explain that local legislators view, especially male, Muslim and non-academic asylum seekers as threatening. Moreover, recalling that participants scoring high on EU asylum and migration policy support did not perceive men as more dangerous than women, we cautiously agree with Schemer (2012) arguing that more well-informed people are more resistant to media influence on the respective topic.

Looking at the results of our experiment, we are joining Davis, Taylor and Murphy, (2014:10) in asking: “Why are we so unwilling to describe Syrian refugee men as vulnerable or in need of protection?”. Generally, there must not be any distinction between civilians fleeing conflict. They should receive the same legal protections. However, our results go against that notion and during humanitarian crisis even humanitarian actors ascribe particular groups, usually women and children, as more vulnerable (Davis et al., 2014). One explanation for men being perceived as less vulnerable and more threatening is offered by the subordinate male target hypothesis. Due to intra-male competition for resources and fear of sexual coercion male asylum seekers are perceived as less being in need and more threatening (Navarrete et al., 2010; Veenstra, 2013).

Migration is an increasing political, social and humanitarian challenge. This study measured attitudes towards asylum seekers held by Flemish politicians and whether these attitudes are influenced by EU migration policy support. In fact we found that Flemish politicians have discriminatory attitudes towards male, Muslim and non-academic asylum seekers. In order to understand these phenomena, we consulted economics, sociology and psychology literature. Since discrimination is a multifaceted topic all theories are interconnected. For instance economic discrimination theory, more specifically taste-based discrimination is based on stereotype research. Stereotypes are facilitated by uniform repetition; hence, the media plays a crucial role. Finally, the sociological subordinate male target hypothesis is rooted in evolutionary psychology. Choosing one theory over another would be presumptuous, as this work is not an economic, nor a psychological or sociological study explicitly and empirically testing the explanatory power of each respective theory. This would be a future research recommendation.

Practical implications

After having shown that discriminatory attitudes against asylum seekers exist in local governments, we now should put thought into how these could be approached. Giuletti et al., (2017) argue that discriminatory practices in local public services are highly concerning since politicians are supposed to be main actors in eradicating it. In fact, anti-discrimination legislations already exist. This shows how difficult it is to tackle discrimination against the most vulnerable. For this reason we consider our study as having high practical relevance. Numerous studies investigated attitudes towards and

discrimination against migrants and asylum seekers in society or in the labour market; however, research examining local legislators is scarce. With this study we raise awareness and contribute to facilitating an open and balanced discussion on potential discrimination against asylum seekers by politicians.

Our results fit previous research having found that well-informed people tend to have and enforce less stereotypes (Schemer, 2012). Counter stereotypic information reduces the tendency to rely on biased beliefs. Moreover, according to Anderson and Ferguson (2018) people's worldview highly influences attitude formation. Understanding the world as competitive and dangerous, asylum seekers are more likely to be perceived as threats to security, resources or cultural identity. Having this in mind while looking at the demographics of our sample (the majority of the participants have never lived more than three month abroad) our finding that male Muslims are perceived as dangerous appears more comprehensible. Moreover, this fact suggests that never having lived abroad might mean never having had the emotional experience of belonging to a national, religious or cultural out-group. Additionally, only having had few encounters with refugees; hence, little occasions were threatening stereotypes could have been disproved or personal stories of refugees could have generated compassionate responses, further underlines the importance of tackling stereotypes of local representatives. In order to live up to the expectations and duty of a political representative being responsible for implementing asylum policies, especially in time of globalisation and high forced migration, local politicians should consider meeting and talking to the people whose lives and wellbeing is directly affected by their actions. Examples of interventions could be visiting refugee shelters, community centres, meeting volunteers etc..

Building up knowledge on the migration situation is another implication for public administration practice. Conferences and seminars given by academics, think-tanks or qualified non-governmental organisations (NGO) could prevent biased attitude towards asylum seekers. By informing about the political and human rights situations in countries of origin, by putting statistics into perspective and by providing information on search and rescue (S&R) operations in the Aegean or Mediterranean local politicians would become more resistant to one-sided media reporting.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that we only measured attitudes, intentions, not behaviour. Our results only enable us to make inferences about local politicians' attitudes towards asylum seekers, not about potential discriminative behaviour against

them. However, attitudes and intentions are a processor of behaviour (Azajn & Fishbein, 1999, Triandis, 1979). If we want integration in Flanders to be successful, discriminatory attitudes held by local legislators, pointing towards the risk of discriminatory decision-making, needs to be prevented (Czymara & Schmidt-Catran, 2017).

Limitations and future research

In the following limitations and future research avenues will be discussed.

Limitations. First, we have to consider that we had many missing values and in fact, this slightly impacts the validity of our results. Whereas the first question about the perceived need of protection was answered by everyone, some participants did not give an answer to the questions on asylum in Belgium (36 missing values) and the respective municipality (38 missing values). The missing value for the security threat question was 111. Questions on asylum imply direct responsibility of local politicians. Hence, it is comprehensible that participants try to avoid making statements on their responsibility. We should have provided a response option in case the participant has no opinion, or make sure that participants could only enter the next page if all questions have been answered. Second, the operationalization of the variable educational background might have been too extreme. Hairdresser and doctor might have been too different. Comparing doctors to nurses would have been better, since both are social/medical professions and mainly differ in the length of education. Third, our empirical context allows us only to make inference about attitudes towards *Syrian* asylum seekers. Fourth, the EU policy support item might have been ambiguous. Since the common EU asylum and migration and asylum policy in its current form is failing dramatically, it is possible that participants indicated they do not support the EU asylum and migration policy, but still being in favour of a common European approach. Fourth, we did not control for participants knowledge on migration and asylum, for instance international refugee law, or Belgium asylum system.

Future research. Future research should replicate our study and address its limitations. For instance, educational background could be operationalized differently (see above) and other independent variables, such as country of origin could be included. However, important to keep in mind is that the volatile nature of approaches to migration in Europe can highly influence results. Hence, findings deviating from our results need to be interpreted cautiously.

Secondly, it would be interesting to measure attitudes of local politicians of other European countries and compare them to Flemish municipalities. By also adding a time series element to the survey experiment it would be possible to examine whether attitudes indeed influence later behaviour (political decision making and/or policy making).

Closing note

This study was planned and carried out in the context of extremely difficult EU negotiations for a common approach the so-called “EU migration crisis“. During times in which migration dominates the political agenda and considering the fact of widespread discrimination against ethnic minorities in all segments of society, we regarded it as necessary to conduct research on discrimination against asylum seekers. To our knowledge, this study is the first one, taking different social sciences perspectives to measure and explain attitudes of local Flemish politicians towards Syrian refugees. Special attention was devoted to whether these attitudes change depending on the politicians’ support for the common EU asylum and migration policy. In fact, local Flemish politicians tend to have discriminatory attitudes towards men, Muslims and non-academic asylum seekers. Negative attitudes against men become weaker among politicians’ supporting a common EU-migration policy. Being aware that we only measured attitudes, not behaviours, we call for follow-up research explicitly testing discriminatory behaviour against asylum seekers. More studies are needed not only in Flanders, but in all 28 EU member states.

In sum, besides its contribution to the body of literature on discrimination and migration, this study draws attention to discrimination against asylum seekers based on gender, religion and educational background on a municipal level.

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