

# VU Research Portal

## Figurative Framing in Political Discourse

Boeynaems, A.

2019

### **document version**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

### **citation for published version (APA)**

Boeynaems, A. (2019). *Figurative Framing in Political Discourse*. [PhD-Thesis - Research and graduation internal, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam].

### **General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

### **Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

### **E-mail address:**

[vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl](mailto:vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl)

The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of 3D, isometric 'F' characters. These characters are rendered in a light gray color and are arranged in a grid-like fashion, creating a textured, architectural effect.

# 5

**Attractive or Repellent?**

**How Right-Wing Populist Voters Respond to  
Figuratively Framed Anti-Immigration  
Rhetoric**

# Attractive or Repellent?

## How Right-Wing Populist Voters Respond to Figuratively Framed Anti-Immigration Rhetoric

### Abstract

The rhetoric employed by right-wing populist parties (RWPPs) has been put forward as an important driver for their success. This rhetoric is partly characterized by the use of anti-immigration metaphors and hyperboles, which likely appeal to voters' grievances. We tested the persuasive impact of figuratively framed RWP rhetoric among a unique sample of Dutch RWPP voters, reporting an experiment with a 2 (metaphor: present, absent)  $\times$  2 (hyperbole: present, absent) between-subjects design. Our findings go against prevailing ideas about how supportive voters respond to RWP rhetoric; figurative language did not steer voters more in line with RWP ideas but pushed their opinion further away. These unexpected boomerang effects mainly held for weakly identified voters. This suggests that RWPP voters support their party, not because of, but despite their rhetoric. Being heard in their grievances, rather than told what to grieve about, seems to be the main driver for RWPP support.

*Keywords: right-wing populist rhetoric, figurative-framing effects, political persuasion, party-identification strength*

This chapter has been submitted for publication as: Boeynaems, A., Burgers, C., Konijn, E. A., & Steen, G. J. (under review). Attractive or repellent? How right-wing populist voters respond to figuratively framed anti-immigration rhetoric.

## INTRODUCTION

Right-wing populism is on the rise in Western Europe. Over the years, right-wing populist parties like the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV), the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and the British UK Independence Party (UKIP) became important political players (McDonnell & Werner, 2017). In a broad sense, populism can be defined as an ideology that separates society into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups: 'the pure people' and the 'corrupt elite', who fail to express the will of 'the people' (Mudde, 2017). For right-wing populism, this 'thin' populist ideology is combined with nationalism (De Cleen, 2017). When it comes to successful right-wing populist parties (RWPPs), they have at least one thing in common: outsiders and immigrants are perceived as a threat to a nation's identity, culture and economic interests, and established political elites are blamed for favoring the interests of outsiders over the rights of the presumed 'own people' (De Cleen, 2017; Ivarsflaten, 2008).

Current research displays different factors that might explain the electoral success of RWPPs (Berning & Schlueter, 2016; Bos, Van der Brug & de Vreese, 2013). The rhetoric employed by RWPPs is considered an important factor in fueling RWPP success (Matthes & Schmuck, 2017). This right-wing populist rhetoric (RWP rhetoric) likely appeals to voters' prior convictions, especially anti-immigration grievances, present among specific parts of the electorate (Hameleers, Bos & de Vreese, 2018; Rydgren, 2008). With their rhetoric, RWPPs can further foster feelings of discontent and steer the political opinion of susceptible voters more in line with their ideas, hence increasing RWPP support (Bos et al., 2013; Krämer, 2014). Generally, it is assumed that RWPP rhetoric is mostly persuasive for voters who, at least to some extent, share the worldview articulated by RWPPs (Krämer, 2014). To further unravel what makes RWPPs so successful among parts of the electorate, this study tests how voters who support an RWPP (RWPP voters) respond to typical RWP rhetoric.

The rhetoric employed by RWPPs has been characterized by the use of strong, vivid anti-immigration metaphors and hyperboles (Hogan & Haltinner, 2015; Kalkhoven, 2015), which likely add to the intensity and emotiveness of typical right-wing populist (RWP) rhetoric (Kalkhoven, 2015). When metaphors and/or hyperboles are used to frame anti-immigration statements, this figuratively framed rhetoric can further strengthen perceived feelings of discontent and steer the political opinion of susceptible voters more in line with RWP ideas (Bos et al., 2013; Krämer, 2014). Thus, with their strong anti-immigration rhetoric, RWPPs might further fuel political discontent, and hence strengthen RWPP support (Rooduijn, van der Brug & de Lange, 2016).

According to the ‘fueling discontent argument’ (Rooduijn et al., 2016), political discontent and exposure to (right-wing) populist messages can mutually reinforce each other over time. In this study, we add an extra component to this ‘fueling discontent argument’ and propose that the persuasive impact of figuratively framed RWP rhetoric depends on the strength with which voters identify with an RWPP. Voters who strongly identify with an RWPP might have developed an anti-immigration stance that does not need to be fueled by populist metaphors and hyperboles: their political opinion already strongly resembles RWP ideas (Berning & Schlueter, 2016; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Westfall, Van Boven, Chambers & Judd, 2015). The political opinion of voters who feel weakly attached to an RWPP, however, is likely to be more susceptible to the persuasive impact of RWP rhetoric (Druckman, Peterson & Slothuus, 2013; Hameleers, Bos & de Vreese, 2017): there is still room for RWP rhetoric to fuel RWP ideas. Hence, we assume that voters who strongly identify with an RWPP respond differently to RWP rhetoric than those who weakly identify.

We test these assumptions among a unique sample of RWPP voters. While this group of RWPP voters has been subject to scholarly and public debates about the rising success of RWPPs, no experimental research has yet tested how they actually respond to RWP rhetoric. We report on an

experiment in which we tested how RWPP voters react to typical RWP rhetoric, how RWPP-identification strength is related to support for RWP policy, and how party-identification strength influences the persuasive impact of RWP rhetoric. Results of this study can help to further unravel what makes RWPPs so successful among a specific group of voters.

### *HOW RIGHT-WING POPULIST RHETORIC AFFECTS POLITICAL OPINION*

The typical rhetoric employed by RWPP leaders has been put forward as an import cause for RWPP success (Bos et al., 2013; Matthes & Schmuck, 2015). This RWP rhetoric oftentimes has a strong, negative focus on immigration, which likely appeals to sentiments of discontent present among specific parts of the electorate (De Landtsheer, 2015; Hameleers et al, 2018). With their rhetoric, RWPPs can further foster immigration grievances and other feelings of discontent, thereby steering the political opinion of parts of the electorate more in line with RWP ideas, hence increasing RWPP support (Bos et al., 2013; Krämer, 2014). Generally, scholars who study the persuasive impact of RWP rhetoric consider this rhetoric mostly persuasive for voters who, at least to some extent, share the worldview propagated by RWPPs (Krämer, 2014). Among voters who disagree with RWP ideas, on the other hand, the extreme rhetoric employed by RWPPs might evoke reactance and might steer their political opinion further away from populist ideas (Krämer, 2014; Müller et al., 2017).

The strong anti-immigration rhetoric employed by RWP politicians has been characterized by the frequent use of at least two types of figurative language, namely metaphor (De Landtsheer, 2015) and hyperbole (Kalkhoven, 2015). Metaphors are defined as “cross-domain mappings” that transfer elements of a source domain onto a target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 203). For example, Donald Trump Junior, metaphorically compared Syrian refugees to poisoned candy on the campaign trail: “If I

had a bowl of skittles and I told you just three would kill you. Would you take a handful? – That’s our Syrian refugee problem.” (The New York Times, 2016). This metaphorical frame shapes a very negative and threatening image of Syrian refugees that Trump Jr. used to convey his father’s strong anti-immigration stance. Metaphorical frames like this can affect how voters perceive an issue (Burgers, Konijn & Steen, 2016).

Hyperbole is defined as “an expression that is more extreme than justified given its ontological referent” (Burgers, Brugman, Renardel de Lavalette, & Steen, 2016, p. 166). For example, in a highly criticized campaign movie, the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) rhetorically equated Islam with a series of extremely negative and threatening concepts, racist ideologies, and awful historical events. In the short movie, the words ‘Islam is’ appear on screen, followed by alternating hyperbolic terms like ‘terror’, ‘totalitarian’, ‘slavery’, ‘anti-Semitism’, and ‘lethal’ (Elsevier, 2018). This hyperbolic frame depicts Islam as an extreme and frightening religion, and has been widely condemned by the other Dutch political parties. Hyperboles can exaggerate threats (Doig & Phythian, 2005), and thereby help to mobilize support for RWP policy proposals (Kalkhoven & De Landtsheer, 2016).

In general, both metaphor and hyperbole are rhetorical figures that can trigger emotional responses like anger and fear, and can increase a statement’s intensity (Charteris-Black, 2006; Claridge, 2010). More specifically, RWP rhetoric draws on fear by highlighting how immigration threatens the nation, and plays on anger by emphasizing that the political elite fails to defend the interest of the nation’s presumed ‘own people’ (Hameleers et al., 2017). These, and other, emotions can mediate the persuasive impact of (right-wing) populist rhetoric (Lecheler, Bos & Vliegthart, 2015; Wirz, 2018). The same holds for message intensity (i.e., the degree to which a statement differs from an objective, non-evaluative, statement; Hamilton & Stewart, 1993). Emotions and affect can add to persuasion in general, and more specifically by increasing the statements’

attributed information value (Konijn, Walma van der Molen & van Nes, 2009). Thereby, a statement that is perceived as intense and/or emotive is likely more persuasive than a neutral statement (Hamilton & Stewart, 1993; Nabi, 2009).

Both metaphors and hyperboles are tools par excellence to rhetorically create, or broaden, a gap between an in-group of ‘pure’ national citizens and an out-group, which can be an established political elite, a group of perceived outsiders (e.g., immigrants or foreign cultures), or both (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018). Both types of figuration can be used to simplify and exaggerate societal issues and promote straightforward solutions to societal problems (Doig & Phythian, 2005; Musolff, 2017; Norrick, 2004). Moreover, within RWP rhetoric, metaphor and hyperbole are oftentimes combined within a singular frame (Kalkhoven, 2015). For example, Geert Wilders hyperbolically extended the conventional metaphor ‘a wave of asylum seekers’ into ‘a tsunami of asylum seekers’, when he referred to the number of refugees coming to the Netherlands (Metro, 2015). Because combinatory figurative frames contain multiple rhetorical operations, they likely become relatively hard to challenge, which may increase their persuasive power compared to frames that solely comprise one type of figurative language (Burgers, Konijn & Steen, 2016).

Thus, it seems that typical RWP rhetoric can be an important booster for RWPP success (Bos et al., 2013; Matthes & Schmuck, 2015), and may be one of the reasons why some voters are attracted to these parties. Figuratively framed RWP rhetoric likely appeals to supportive voters, and hence can steer RWPP voters’ opinion even more in line with RWP ideas (Krämer, 2014; Stockemer & Barisione, 2017). Nevertheless, current experimental studies mainly focus on either student samples (Arendt, Marquart & Matthes, 2015), among which support for RWPPs is relatively low (Arendt et al., 2015), or on samples that are representative for the population of all voters (Bos et al., 2013; Hameleers et al., 2017, 2018; Matthes & Schmuck, 2015). Because of the multi-party systems common in Western-European



countries, such samples likely include low percentages of RWPP voters (Oesch, 2008), which makes it hard to make claims about how supportive voters respond to typical RWP rhetoric. Therefore, we tested how RWPP voters respond to typical RWP rhetoric in a controlled experiment for which we recruited a relatively large sample of RWPP voters from the Dutch population. This would reveal whether these theoretical assumptions about the persuasive impact of RWP rhetoric actually hold among a large sample of RWPP voters.

In sum, we expected that the metaphorical and hyperbolic frames used by RWP politicians steer the political opinion of RWPP voters more in line with populist ideas. Moreover, we expected these metaphorical and hyperbolic statements to be persuasive through perceptions of intensity (Kalkhoven & De Landtsheer, 2016) and emotiveness (Lecheler et al., 2015; Wirz, 2018). Therefore, we hypothesized that:

*H1: Voters with an RWPP preference are more persuaded by right-wing populist statements that comprise both metaphor and hyperbole, than by frames that are either metaphorical or hyperbolic, which, in turn, are more persuasive than non-figurative frames.*

*H2: The persuasive effects of figuratively framed right-wing populist statements are mediated by (a) perceived message intensity, and (b) evoked emotions.*

## **HOW RWPP-IDENTIFICATION STRENGTH SHAPES POLITICAL PERSUASION**

According to the ‘fueling discontent argument’, policy dissatisfaction and exposure to populist messages can mutually reinforce each other over time (Heiss & Matthes, 2017; Rooduijn et al., 2016). In general, voters who feel threatened by an out-group of immigrants are likely to support a political party that acknowledges their fears and concerns, and promotes a strong anti-immigration policy (Berning & Schlueter, 2016; Rydgren, 2008).

Feelings of discontent, for example about current immigration policies, can therefore explain why voters support an RWPP (Ivarsflaten, 2008). At the same time, the strong anti-immigration rhetoric employed by RWPPs can further fuel this political discontent, and hence strengthen anti-immigration attitudes and reinforce RWPP support (Rooduijn et al., 2016). In addition to this, we argue that the strength with which supportive voters feel connected to the RWPP they support affects their political opinion in at least two ways: (1) directly, and (2) indirectly, by moderating their responses to RWP rhetoric.

First, RWPP-identification strength can directly influence political attitudes and voting behavior (Druckman et al., 2013; Miller & Johnston Conover, 2015). Party identification can shape a voter's 'social identity', which is the part of an individual's self-concept that is derived from an emotionally valued group membership (Tajfel, 1981). Voters who strongly identify with a political party consider themselves a member of an in-group (Miller & Johnston Conover, 2015; Tajfel, 1981), which might influence their thoughts and behavior, and may result in in-group favoritism and out-group derogation (Krämer, 2014; Miller & Johnston Conover, 2015). When party-identification strength increases, group threats are interpreted as threats to the self, judgments become further biased and while the out-group is blamed for everything that goes wrong, the in-group is absolved of all blame (Miller & Johnston Conover, 2015; Westfall et al., 2015). Thus, voters who strongly identify with an RWPP are likeliest to feel (personally) threatened by an out-group of immigrants, which might result in even more support for an RWPP and its anti-immigration policy. Following this line of reasoning, the political attitudes that initially defined voters' choice for an RWPP can be further strengthened when voters start to feel strongly connected to this RWPP (Druckman, et al., 2013; Miller & Johnston Conover, 2015; Westfall et al., 2015).

To test whether support for an RWPP policy is indeed related to the strength with which voters feel connected to their favorite RWPP, we propose the following hypothesis:

*H3: RWPP-identification strength is positively related to political persuasion.*

Second, by moderating how RWPP voters respond to figuratively framed RWP rhetoric, party-identification strength might indirectly affect political opinion. We argue that the persuasive impact of figuratively framed RWP rhetoric depends on the strength with which voters identify with an RWPP. Voters who strongly identify with an RWPP might have developed an anti-immigration stance that does not need to be fueled by populist metaphors and hyperboles: their political opinion already strongly resembles RWP ideas (Berning & Schlueter, 2016; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Westfall et al., 2015). The political opinion of voters who feel weakly attached to an RWPP, however, is likely more susceptible to the persuasive impact of RWP rhetoric (Druckman et al., 2013; Hameleers et al., 2017): there is still room for RWP rhetoric to fuel political opinion (Hameleers et al., 2017). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

*H4: Party-identification strength moderates the persuasive effects of figuratively framed right-wing populist statements, so that voters who weakly identify with an RWPP are more responsive to figuratively framed populist statements than voters who identify strongly with an RWPP.*

## METHOD

### PARTICIPANTS

To recruit a sufficiently large sample of RWPP voters, we used a research panel from a large Dutch research company. This research company has specific demographic information of all potential participants, including voting preferences. We asked the research company to distribute the

survey only among voters who indicated to have voted for either Geert Wilders' Freedom Party (PVV) or Thierry Baudet's Forum for Democracy (FvD) in the 2017 national elections. Both PVV (with 20 out of 150 seats, the second largest party in the House of Representatives), and newcomer FvD (two seats in the House of Representatives) have been characterized as RWPPs with a strong anti-immigration focus (Hameleers, 2017). We checked whether the demographic information on RWPP preference collected earlier by the research company was still correct by asking participants to list their favorite political party out of all thirteen parties currently elected to Dutch Parliament. Participants who indicated to favor any other party than PVV or FvD were dropped. Other inclusion criteria were that participants had to have completed secondary school, have the Dutch nationality, and be native speakers of Dutch.

A total of 519 participants completed the online study. Sixty participants were dropped because they indicated to favor a political party other than PVV or FvD, and nineteen participants were excluded because they did not complete secondary school. Thirty participants were excluded because they did not pass a simple reading check (i.e., could not name any relevant keywords from the populist statement they read as stimulus material). This left 410 unique participants for analysis, all of whom had the Dutch nationality and were native speakers of Dutch (PVV preference: 286, FvD preference: 124; 224 males, 186 females,  $M_{\text{age}} = 59.98$  year,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.95$ , range = 23-86 years). Participants were evenly distributed across experimental conditions regarding age, ( $F(3,406) = .23, p = .88$ ), gender ( $\chi^2(3) = .10, p = .99$ ), and strength of party identification ( $F(3,406) = .62, p = .60$ ).

## DESIGN AND MATERIALS

The experiment had a 2 (populist metaphor: present, absent)  $\times$  2 (populist hyperbole: present, absent) between-subjects design. Participants read a short populist statement from an anonymous Dutch politician. The

fictitious statement promoted a stricter asylum policy to reduce the influx of economic refugees to the Netherlands. The populist statements were created for research purposes,<sup>22</sup> but were based on actual Dutch public discourse in news media. The metaphors were based on a comparison between economic refugees and thieves (e.g., ‘economic refugees form a gang of asylum seekers’, ‘our country has been robbed’; RTL Nieuws, 2015). In the condition with hyperboles, exaggerations like ‘incredibly disadvantaged’ and ‘by all means necessary’ were used. The condition with metaphors and hyperboles comprised expressions like ‘an organized gang of asylum seekers’ and ‘our country has been plundered’.

As a stimulus check to verify that our stimuli did not contain any other metaphors or hyperboles than the target metaphors and hyperboles, we analyzed our statements with established and reliable linguistic procedures for metaphor and hyperbole identification (MIPVU: Metaphor Identification Procedure Vrije Universiteit; Steen et al., 2010; HIP: Hyperbole Identification Procedure; Burgers, Brugman et al., 2016). Appendix 10 (or online appendix A, [bit.ly/2sMrfSW](http://bit.ly/2sMrfSW)) provides an overview of the stimuli (both the original Dutch stimuli and a translation from Dutch into English).

## MEASURES

Political persuasion was operationalized through three constructs: (1) policy attitude, (2) evaluation of the politician, and (3) likelihood to vote for the politician.

*Policy attitude* was tapped by asking participants to indicate on slider scales (0 -100) to which extent they thought the proposed policy would be (1) unfavorable or favorable for the Netherlands, (2) unnecessary or necessary for the Netherlands, (3) negative or positive for the Netherlands,

---

<sup>22</sup> This set of stimuli was also used in, and pretested for, an experiment with different participants (i.e., a representative Dutch sample), reported in Chapter 4.

(4) a bad or a good idea for the Netherlands (based on Hartman, 2012;  $\alpha = .80$ ).

*Evaluation of the politician* was measured with a feelings thermometer on a slider scale ranging from 0-100 on which participants could indicate how unfavorable (cold) or favorable (warm) they felt about the politician (Ditonto, Lau, & Sears, 2013).

*Likelihood to vote for the politician* was tapped by asking participants with slider scales (0-100) how likely they would (1) vote for the politician, (2) vote for the politician if elections were held today (Fernandes, 2013;  $r = .96$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

*Perceived message intensity* was measured by asking participants to rate to which extent they perceived the statement as forceful, extreme, intense, and exaggerated (slider scales, 0-100). The first three items were derived from the perceived language intensity scale (Hamilton & Stewart, 1993). Because hyperbole is defined as an expression that is more extreme than justified given its ontological referent (Burgers, Konijn & Steen, 2016), a fourth item was added which asked to what extent participants felt the statement to be exaggerated. Scale-reliability was low for the four items ( $\alpha = .41$ ). Based on correlation analyses, we combined the items 'extreme' and 'exaggerated' into one item: perceived extremity ( $\alpha = .81$ ;  $r = .69$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The other two items, 'intense' and 'forceful', were analyzed separately.

*Emotions* were measured with seven separate items. We asked participants to rate on slider scales (0-100) to which extent they felt one or more of the following emotions when reading the statement: anger, fear, contentment, enthusiasm, hope, compassion, and sadness (Lecheler, et al., 2015). We treated the different emotions as discrete variables (cf. Lecheler et al., 2015). For interpretation purposes, we refer to anger, fear and sadness as 'negative emotions', to enthusiasm, hope and contentment as 'positive emotions', and to compassion as 'other'.

To measure *RWPP-identification strength*, we first asked participants to select their favorite political party from a list with all 13 political parties

with at least one seat in the Dutch House of Representatives (participants who indicated to support a political party other than PVV or FvD were excluded from analysis. Subsequently, we measured RWPP-identification strength by asking participants to indicate to which extent they consider themselves to be a convinced adherent of their preferred political party (Bankert, Huddy & Rosema, 2017).

*Perceived novelty* and *perceived aptness* were measured as control variables. We took novelty and aptness into account because they are described as factors that can influence figurative-language effects (Thibodeau & Durgin, 2011). Aptness reflects the degree to which a recipient believes a figurative comparison captures important topic features (Thibodeau & Durgin, 2011), and is sometimes considered a prerequisite for figurative-framing effects (Steen, 2011). A metaphor can be perceived as apt or not, depending on the quality of the cross-domain mapping (Pierce & Chiappe, 2008; Thibodeau & Durgin, 2011). A hyperbolic frame will be perceived as apt when recipients feel the exaggeration fits the context (Claridge, 2010).

Novelty has been described as a second factor that can affect the persuasive impact of figurative language (Boeynaems, Burgers, Konijn & Steen, 2017; McCarthy & Carter, 2004). It is likely that novel metaphors are processed through comparison, which means that recipients actively compare source and target domain to get to the metaphor's intended meaning (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005; Steen, 2011). By contrast, conventional metaphors are likely processed by categorization, which means that the metaphor's intended meaning is already stored in the mind of the recipient (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005). The same likely holds for novel versus conventional hyperboles (McCarthy & Carter, 2004). While conventionalized tropes likely go unnoticed, novel metaphors (Steen, 2011) and hyperboles (McCarthy & Carter, 2004) attract attention and provide recipients with new issue viewpoints (McCarthy & Carter, 2004; Steen, 2011).

We measured perceived novelty and aptness by asking participants to rate how novel (0 = very novel – 100 = very conventional) and apt (0 = very inappropriate – 100 = very appropriate) they perceived the politician's choice of words (Pierce & Chiappe, 2008). For our analyses, we recoded the scores of novelty, such that a higher score indicates that a metaphor was perceived as more novel.

*Demographic variables.* Finally, we asked participants for their age, gender, and education level in commonly accepted ways.<sup>23</sup>

## PROCEDURE

Data were collected online through Qualtrics ([www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com)) via a large Dutch research company. After computer-based random assignment to one of the four experimental conditions, participants read a short introduction and were asked for informed consent. Next, they were presented with a short populist statement. After reading the statement, participants were asked to describe what images the political statement evoked. This question was used as a reading check. When the answer indicated that the text was not read properly (e.g., when a participant could not mention the general topic or any keywords of the text), the participant was discarded from analysis. Then, before measuring political persuasion, we asked participants how intense they perceived the statement to be, and to what extent the text affected certain emotions. We subsequently measured the control variables of novelty and aptness and asked several demographic questions. Finally, participants were thanked for participation and were redirected to the research company's website to collect their reward.

---

<sup>23</sup> We also measured perceived political persuasion: participants were asked how they thought *other* people would rate the items of policy attitude, evaluation of the politician, and likelihood to vote (cf. Golan, Banning & Lundy, 2008). Moreover, we asked participants to indicate their own approximate political position on a left-right scale, as well as the approximate of the politician. These items, however, fall outside the scope of this study, and are therefore not included in the current analyses. No further variables were measured.



## RESULTS

### *DIRECT EFFECTS ON POLITICAL PERSUASION (H1)*

First, we tested for the direct effects of populist metaphor and hyperbole on political persuasion. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1 and Appendix 11 (or online appendix B, [bit.ly/2sMrfSW](http://bit.ly/2sMrfSW)) presents a correlation matrix.

A 2 x 2 MANOVA with populist metaphor and hyperbole as independent variables and the three constructs of political persuasion (policy attitude, evaluation of the political candidate, likelihood to vote for the politician) as dependent variables, showed no effects of populist metaphor and populist hyperbole on political persuasion, and showed no interactions between populist metaphor and hyperbole (see Table 2 for the statistical analyses). Therefore, we had to reject H1.

### *MESSAGE INTENSITY AND EMOTIONS AS MEDIATORS (H2)*

For mediation to be possible, the independent variable has to directly affect the potential mediator (Hayes, 2017). Therefore, to test H2, we first tested for the impact of populist metaphor and hyperbole on message intensity and emotions. A 2 x 2 MANOVA revealed no direct or interaction effects of populist metaphor and hyperbole on emotions. Next, a second 2 x 2 MANOVA with populist metaphors and hyperboles as independent variables and the different constructs of perceived message intensity (intensity, forcefulness, extremity) as dependent variables, showed no effect of populist hyperbole on perceived message intensity, and no interaction between metaphor and hyperbole. However, the MANOVA did reveal an effect of populist metaphor on perceived message intensity. Univariate analyses showed that populist metaphors increased a statement's intensity and extremity, but not its forcefulness (see Table 2).

Table 1

*Mean Scores (and Standard Deviations) of Message Intensity, Negative Emotions, Positive Emotions, Other emotions, Control Variables, and Political Persuasion*

(N = 410)	No metaphor		Metaphor	
	No hyperbole	Hyperbole	No hyperbole	Hyperbole
Message Intensity				
Intensity	66.63 (23.95)	59.64 (25.39)	67.00 (21.67)	69.49 (24.02)
Forcefulness	80.45 (18.95)	74.31 (20.06)	74.89 (19.96)	78.68 (20.20)
Extremity	25.15 (22.72)	24.61 (21.53)	37.23 (24.63)	25.33 (26.98)
Negative emotions				
Fear	23.83 (30.09)	27.52 (29.70)	31.66 (29.64)	27.38 (28.11)
Anger	35.90 (35.95)	29.08 (30.01)	40.58 (33.69)	38.83 (33.31)
Sadness	26.07 (30.95)	20.74 (25.72)	30.20 (29.06)	29.14 (30.07)
Positive emotions				
Enthusiasm	73.59 (28.35)	67.13 (30.16)	67.10 (30.55)	66.20 (29.74)
Hope	70.99 (32.35)	61.61 (30.48)	64.75 (29.55)	65.74 (32.35)
Contentment	73.73 (29.59)	65.60 (33.01)	66.93 (31.47)	66.49 (30.97)
Other emotions				
Compassion	40.05 (33.43)	36.02 (30.21)	42.15 (31.23)	39.15 (29.59)
Control variables				
Novelty	14.78 (16.82)	22.81 (22.32)	19.17 (24.56)	31.72 (28.18)
Aptness	86.39 (16.90)	82.58 (18.01)	72.81 (23.90)	72.53 (25.98)
Political persuasion				
Policy attitude	90.38 (15.28)	88.12 (16.06)	85.53 (18.37)	87.13 (15.43)
Evaluation of the politician	84.92 (20.37)	82.61 (24.14)	82.17 (21.45)	79.70 (23.86)
Likelihood to vote	83.39 (21.28)	83.06 (23.07)	80.43 (22.03)	79.38 (25.05)

*Note.* All variables were on scales from 0 – 100; higher scores indicate higher intensity, more negative emotions, more positive emotions, higher perceived novelty, higher perceived aptness, a more positive attitude towards the proposed policy, a more positive attitude towards the politician, and a higher likelihood to vote for the politician.

Table 2

Results of 2 (Metaphor: Present, Absent) x 2 (Hyperbole: Present, Absent) Analyses of Variance with the Distinct Emotions (H1), Message Intensity (H1), and the Control Variables Novelty and Aptness (Additional Analyses) as Dependent Variables

IV	DV		df1	df2	F	p	$\eta_p^2$
Metaphor	Political persuasion	MANOVA	3	404	1.33	.27	.01
		MANOVA	3	404	8.66	<.001***	.06
	Message intensity	Intensity			4.70	<.05*	.01
		Forcefulness	1	406	.36	.76	.001
		Extremity			22.69	<.001***	.05
	Emotions	MANOVA	7	400	1.14	.34	.02
	Control variables	MANOVA	2	405	15.72	<.001***	.07
		Novelty			25.39	<.001***	.06
		Aptness	1	406	30.38	<.001***	.07
	Political persuasion	MANOVA	3	404	.62	.61	.01
	Message intensity	MANOVA	3	404	1.14	.34	.02
	Emotions	MANOVA	7	400	1.02	.42	.02
Hyperbole	Emotions	MANOVA	2	405	3.65	<.05*	.02
		Novelty	1	406	5.24	<.05*	.01
		Aptness	1	406	.91	.34	.002
	Political persuasion	MANOVA	3	404	.62	.61	.01
	Message Intensity	MANOVA	3	404	2.48	.06	.02
	Emotions	MANOVA	7	400	1.29	.26	.02
	Control variables	MANOVA	2	405	.72	.49	.004
	Metaphor x Hyperbole	MANOVA	3	404	.62	.61	.01
		MANOVA	3	404	2.48	.06	.02
		MANOVA	7	400	1.29	.26	.02
	Control variables	MANOVA	2	405	.72	.49	.004

\* Significant at  $p < .05$  level, \*\* significant at  $p < .01$  level, \*\*\*significant at  $p < .001$  level

These analyses showed that, as expected, metaphorically framed RWP statements were perceived as more intense and extreme than nonmetaphorical statements. However, contrary to our expectation, we found no effects of metaphors on emotional responses, and no effects of hyperboles on voters' emotions and perceived message intensity.

Next, we tested whether political persuasion was indirectly affected via intensity and extremity, using the Process macro v3.0 for SPSS statistics (Hayes, 2017; 5,000 bootstrap samples, see Table 3 for the statistical analyses). Mediation analyses revealed no indirect effects of populist metaphors on political persuasion via intensity. However, via extremity, we found indirect negative effects of populist metaphors on all three constructs of political persuasion. Metaphorical statements were perceived as more extreme than nonmetaphorical statements, which, in turn, negatively influenced voters' evaluation of the proposed policy, their evaluation of the political candidate, and the likelihood that they would vote for the politician. While we expected extremity to add to a statement's persuasiveness, results showed an indirect negative effect, via extremity, on political persuasion. This means that when statements are perceived as (too) extreme, this actually pushes RWPP voters' political opinion away from RWP ideas. These findings contradict H2.

### *THE ROLE OF RWPP-IDENTIFICATION STRENGTH (H3, H4)*

A 2 (populist metaphor: absent, present) x 2 (populist hyperbole: present, absent) MANCOVA with party-identification strength as a covariate included in the statistical model, showed a significant main effect of RWPP-identification strength on political persuasion, Pillai's Trace = .17,  $F(3,400) = 26.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .17$ . Voters who strongly identify with a RWPP, scored higher on policy attitude,  $F(1,402) = 46.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .10$ , evaluation of the politician,  $F(1,402) = 37.98$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .12$ , and likelihood to vote for the politician,  $F(1,402) = 56.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .09$ . This

supports H3 that RWPP-identification strength is positively related to political persuasion.

Against expectations, our analysis revealed no interaction effects of RWPP-identification strength with metaphor, Pillai's Trace = .004,  $F(3,400) = .58$ ,  $p = .60$ ), with hyperbole, Pillai's Trace = .01,  $F(3,400) = 1.27$ ,  $p = .29$ , or with metaphor and hyperbole combined, Pillai's Trace = .02,  $F(3,400) = 2.18$ ,  $p = .09$ .

We further explored whether RWPP-identification strength would affect the indirect effects of populist metaphor on political persuasion, via extremity and intensity (see Table 4). We found no moderating effects of RWPP-identification strength on the indirect effects of figuratively framed statements, via intensity, on political persuasion. However, in line with H4, moderated mediation analyses showed that the indirect effects of populist metaphors on political persuasion via extremity were influenced by the strength with which voters identify with the RWPP. As party-identification strength increased, these negative indirect effects via extremity diminished (see Table 4 for the statistical analyses). Thus, the extreme character of the statements especially pushed the political opinion of weakly and moderately identified RWPP voters away from the advocated RWP policy. Voters who strongly identify with an RWPP, however, seem adamant in their support for a politician who promotes a right-wing anti-immigration ideology, even if they considered the rhetoric to be extreme.

Table 3  
Indirect Effects of Figuratively Framed Populist Statements on Political Persuasion via Extremity, Novelty, and Aptness.

IV	Mediator	DV	b	SE B	95%CI
Metaphor	Extremity	Policy attitude	-1.76	.56	[-2.97, -.80]*
		Evaluation of the politician	-3.87	1.03	[-6.01, -2.06]*
		Likelihood to vote	-4.93	1.22	[-7.47, -2.66]*
Metaphor	Intensity	Policy attitude	.38	.30	[-.02, 1.11] <sup>ns</sup>
		Evaluation of the politician	.34	.31	[-.13, 1.07] <sup>ns</sup>
		Likelihood to vote	.20	.27	[-.25, .85] <sup>ns</sup>
Metaphor	Novelty	Policy attitude	-3.02	.68	[-4.43, -1.76]*
		Evaluation of the politician	-3.87	1.03	[-6.05, -2.01]*
		Likelihood to vote	-4.50	1.08	[-6.78, -2.58]*
Metaphor	Aptness	Policy attitude	-3.87	.76	[-5.44, -2.46]*
		Evaluation of the politician	-6.35	1.27	[-8.93, -3.89]*
		Likelihood to vote	-7.12	1.40	[-9.96, -4.54]*
Hyperbole	Novelty	Policy attitude	-1.34	.63	[-2.65, -.16]*
		Evaluation of the politician	-1.71	.81	[-3.40, -.24]*
		Likelihood to vote	-1.99	.94	[-3.92, -.25]*

*Note.* We used the Process macro v3.0 for SPSS statistics (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap samples for all our mediation analyses. Each indirect effect was tested with a distinctive mediation analyses that included one mediator at the time.

\* Indirect effect is significant with at least  $p < .05$  (95% confidence interval does not include zero)

<sup>ns</sup> not significant

## *ADDITIONAL ANALYSES: THE ROLE OF NOVELTY AND APTNESS*

We analyzed whether the control variables of perceived novelty and perceived aptness influenced the persuasive impact of figuratively framed populist statements. A 2 (populist metaphor: absent, present) x 2 (populist hyperbole: present, absent) MANOVA with novelty and aptness as dependent variables showed effects of metaphor and hyperbole (see Table 2). Metaphors decreased aptness, and increased novelty. We showed that hyperboles also increased novelty, but not aptness. No interaction effects between metaphor and hyperbole were found.

Novelty and aptness both correlated with the three constructs of political persuasion (see Appendix 11, or online appendix B ([bit.ly/2sMrfSW](http://bit.ly/2sMrfSW)), for a correlation matrix). Therefore, we conducted mediation analyses to test whether novelty and aptness mediated the impact of figuratively framed populist statements (see Table 3).<sup>24</sup> Results showed that voters were less positive about the politician and the proposed policy when they perceived the metaphorical statement as inappropriate and/or novel. Populist hyperbole had a negative indirect effect on political persuasion via perceived novelty (see Table 3).

---

<sup>24</sup> Although multicollinearity tests suggested no problems with multicollinearity, we conducted separate mediation analyses for perceived novelty and aptness, because of the high correlation ( $r = -.81$ ) between novelty and aptness.

Table 4  
Results of Moderated Mediation Analyses - The Effects of Metaphor on Political Persuasion, via Intensity and Extremity, Moderated by Party-Identification Strength

IV	DV	Moderator	Mediator			
Party-identification strength			Extremity			
			<i>b</i>	<i>SE B</i>	95% CI	
Metaphor	Policy attitude	Moderated mediation index	.04	.02	[.01, .09]*	
		- 1 SD	-2.28	.77	[-4.01, -.97]*	
		M	-1.41	.49	[-2.54, -.61]*	
		+1 SD	-.55	.45	[-1.57, .20] <sup>ns</sup>	
Party-identification strength			Extremity			
Metaphor	Evaluation of politician	Moderated mediation index	.08	.03	[.03, .14]*	
		- 1 SD	-4.97	1.31	[-7.87, -2.75]*	
		M	-3.49	.92	[-5.61, -1.96]*	
		+1 SD	-2.01	.81	[-3.97, -.76]*	
Party-identification strength			Extremity			
Metaphor	Likelihood to vote	Moderated mediation index	.09	.03	[.04, .16]*	
		- 1 SD	-6.19	1.49	[-9.51, -3.60]*	
		M	-4.69	1.10	[-6.93, -2.58]*	
		+1 SD	-2.79	.91	[-5.11, -1.41]*	
Party-identification strength			Intensity			
Metaphor	Policy attitude	Moderated mediation index	.002	.01	[-.02, .03] <sup>ns</sup>	
		Party-identification strength	Intensity			
Metaphor	Evaluation of politician	Moderated mediation index	.02	.02	[-.01, .05] <sup>ns</sup>	
		Party-identification strength	Intensity			



Metaphor	Likelihood to vote	Party-identification strength		Intensity	
		<i>b</i>	<i>SE B</i>	95% CI	
		.005	.01	[-.03, .04] <sup>ns</sup>	
Moderated mediation index					

*Note.* We used the Process macro v3.0 for SPSS statistics (Hayes, 2018) with 5,000 bootstrap samples for all our moderated mediation analyses. Each indirect effect was tested with a distinctive analysis that included one mediator at the time.

\* Indirect effect is significant with at least  $p < .05$  (95% confidence interval does not include zero)

<sup>ns</sup> not significant

We further analyzed whether party-identification strength influenced these indirect effects and found no moderating effect of party-identification strength on the indirect effects, via novelty and aptness, on political persuasion. Indices of moderated mediation showed no significant results for any of the moderated mediation analyses with perceived novelty or aptness included as mediator (See Appendix 12, or online appendix C ([bit.ly/2sMrfSW](http://bit.ly/2sMrfSW)), for a complete report). Thus, while figuratively framed populist statements that were perceived as novel and/or inappropriate did evoke indirect negative effects, these effects were not stronger for mildly identified voters, compared to strongly identified voters.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

With this study, we aimed to unravel what makes RWPPs rhetoric successful among voters with an RWPP preference. We reasoned that typical figuratively framed RWP rhetoric (i.e., using metaphors, hyperboles, and combinations thereof) can steer the political opinion of supportive voters further in line with RWPP ideas and hence increase RWPP support. However, instead of being persuasive, figuratively framed RWP statements indirectly decreased RWPP voters' support for the politician and the advocated policy: when figuratively framed statements were perceived as extreme, novel and/or inappropriate, this deterred even supportive voters. Thus, our findings go against prevailing ideas held by framing scholars about how supportive voters respond to RWP rhetoric (Hameleers et al., 2018; Krämer, 2014; Rooduijn et al., 2016). This raises an interesting discussion, in the following.

Our results indicate that the (extremely) negative anti-immigration metaphors used by RWP politicians can put off RWPP voters. Instead of increasing a statement's persuasiveness, metaphors and hyperboles indirectly pushed RWPP voters' political opinion further away from RWP ideas. We would expect such boomerang effects to occur for voters whose worldview does not align with RWP ideas, but not for RWPP voters

(Boeynaems, Burgers & Konijn, *Chapter 4* of this dissertation; Krämer, 2014). This suggests that, even among supportive voters, RWP politicians can exceed the limits of acceptable language use, resulting in lower RWPP support. However, these negative indirect effects of metaphors and hyperboles on political persuasion are small, and, regardless of the way the statement is framed, RWPP voters are highly supportive of the politician and the proposed anti-immigration policy. Thus, even when RWPP voters disapprove the metaphors and hyperboles used to frame political statements, they still support the general thrust of the statement.

Our findings suggest that the promise of stronger anti-immigration measures is what makes RWPP voters' hearts tick, regardless, or even despite, the way such a promise is framed. In general, an important reason why voters support a non-governing populist party (either left-wing or right-wing) is dissatisfaction with traditional politics, as a form of protest against established political parties and their policies (Birch & Dennison, 2017). Most studies on the causes for RWPP success demonstrate that, for RWPP voters, this political dissatisfaction is largely based on anti-immigration sentiments (Akkerman, Zaslove & Spruyt, 2017; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Oesch, 2008). When anti-immigration attitudes are such an important factor in defining voters' electoral choices, the promise of strong anti-immigration measures will likely be positively received, even when the use of extremely negative figurative language slightly tempers this enthusiasm. Our results support this idea by showing high overall rates on political persuasion. When looking at political landscapes across Western Europe, RWPPs take up the strongest stance on immigration by far, as compared to other political parties (van Spanje, 2010). Thus, even when RWPP rhetoric slightly decreases voters' support, the ideological distance between RWPPs and other political parties might be too large for voters to swap party preference (van Spanje & van der Brug, 2009).

We hypothesized that the extent to which figuratively framed RWP statements affect voters' political opinion depends on the strength with

which these voters identify with an RWPP. We expected mildly supportive voters to be most susceptible to the persuasion by typical RWP anti-immigration rhetoric. We showed that party-identification strength indeed influenced the effects of figuratively framed RWP statements on political persuasion, yet the effects were not in the expected direction. We found instead that the indirect negative effects of metaphors and hyperboles on political persuasion mainly held for voters who weakly or mildly support an RWPP. The political opinion of voters who feel strongly connected to 'their' RWPP, on the other hand, seems more immune to the extreme character of RWP rhetoric. In fact, labeling such rhetoric 'extreme' implies an evaluative stance; it is not just a message characteristic but involves an evaluation from the voter's perspective.

For voters who strongly support an RWPP, it might well be that such 'extreme' anti-immigration rhetoric has become part of their daily repertoire. In general, voters tend to expose themselves to information that matches their worldview (Hameleers et al., 2018). Thus, when voters more strongly support anti-immigration stances, they are likelier to expose themselves to RWP anti-immigration rhetoric (Hameleers et al., 2018; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Miller & Johnston Conover, 2015). When individuals are repeatedly confronted with an intense and emotive stimulus, such as the highly negative metaphors used by RWP politicians, they can become habituated or desensitized: the stimulus loses its emotive 'force' (Tryon, 2005). Moreover, when voters are frequently exposed to strong and negative metaphors and hyperboles, the assumed novel character of such figurative framing may get lost (Boeynaems et al., 2017); these figurations will likely be perceived as appropriate to use in the immigration debate. Given our results, it seems plausible that processes of desensitization and habituation occurred for the RWPP voters who strongly identified with an RWPP, and likely less so, or not at all, for voters who weakly identify with an RWPP. The absence of emotive responses to extremely negative RWP rhetoric, supports this idea.

Our findings support the hypothesis that RWPP-identification strength is positively related to political persuasion. If voters more strongly identify with an RWPP, they show stronger support for a politician who advocates stricter anti-immigration policy. While we can assume that voters who support an RWPP are, *a priori*, in favor of stronger anti-immigration policy (Berning & Schlueter, 2016), we showed that voters who feel strongly connected to an RWPP are more supportive of a politician who promotes stricter anti-immigration measures than voters who feel weakly connected to an RWPP. Since RWPP-identification strength did not serve as an independent variable in our experiment, we cannot make causal claims about the effects of party-identification strength on political opinion and behavior. Nevertheless, the positive relation between party-identification strength and support for stricter anti-immigration measures supports the idea that voters who strongly identify with an in-group (the RWPP) feel more threatened by immigrants (i.e., ‘the out-group’; Krämer, 2014; Miller & Johnston Conover, 2015). Future research could explore how the extent with which voters feel connected to an RWPP shapes political opinion over time.

Overall, it seems that the use of extreme and negative figurative language involves a risk for RWPPs. Its extreme character can deter even supportive voters, and hence decrease RWPP support. However, indirectly, the extreme rhetoric employed by RWPPs might contribute to their success. Because of their extreme stances, RWPPs are oftentimes excluded from politics by established parties, who publicly distance themselves from RWPP ideas (van Spanje & van der Brug, 2009). At first sight, it seems to be an effective strategy to ban extreme political parties from the political arena. However, parliamentary opposition parties that experienced electoral success generally do not suffer from being ostracized by other parties. Rather, being excluded from the political arena can further fuel their success (van Spanje & van der Brug, 2009). When supportive voters, especially strongly identified voters, feel that their RWPP is

threatened, this might further strengthen their support for this RWPP (Wagner & Meyer, 2017; Westfall et al., 2015). Thus, rather than directly steering political opinion more in line with populist ideas, the extreme language employed by RWPPs might serve as a tool to indirectly gain electoral support. With their extreme rhetoric, RWPPs reinforce the distinctiveness between political parties and broaden the gap between supportive and opposing voters (van Spanje & van der Brug, 2009; Boeynaems, et al., Chapter 4). Thereby, the typical rhetoric employed by RWPPs can put in motion further polarization of societies, which might eventually completely shut down the political and societal dialogue about immigration, and other political issues, creating strongly divided nations.

For this research, we tested how RWPP voters respond to figuratively framed RWP statements. Our results are therefore limited to the specific context of right-wing anti-immigration rhetoric. We chose to focus on anti-immigration rhetoric which is one of the main priorities of Western-European RWPPs (Bos & Brants, 2014). Moreover, mobilizing immigration grievances has been depicted as an important explanation for RWPP's success (Ivarsflaten, 2008). Thus, for the voters within our sample, anti-immigration attitudes were likely an important reason why they voted for an RWPP in the first place (Ivarsflaten, 2008). This can explain the high average scores on all three constructs of political persuasion across experimental conditions, indicating potential ceiling effects. It might be that these, *a priori*, anti-immigration attitudes were so strong that there was little room left for metaphors and hyperboles to boost RWPP support (Hameleers et al., 2018). Since the political ideas of RWPPs reach further than just immigration policy (Ivarsflaten, 2008), future research could test for the persuasive impact of metaphors and hyperboles when these rhetorical figures are used to frame societal issues that are not as highly debated and as politically charged as immigration.

While it is commonly theorized that RWP rhetoric derives its persuasiveness from its ability to spark negative emotions like anger and

fear (Hameleers et al., 2017), our findings do not support this hypothesis. We found no effects of typical RWP rhetoric on emotions for RWPP voters. Furthermore, both anger and fear were negatively correlated to political persuasion in our sample of RWPP voters, which goes against current theories of RWPP success (e.g., Hameleers, 2017; Matthes & Schmuck, 2017). This suggests that the relation between political rhetoric, emotions, and persuasion might be more complex than is oftentimes theorized (Lecheler et al., 2015; Matthes & Schmuck, 2015; Wirz, 2018). Voter perceptions and individual differences (e.g., party identification) influence the extent to which political rhetoric is perceived as intense and emotive, and thereby affects its persuasiveness. Therefore, we argue that future research should focus on the mediating role of emotional responsiveness and voters' perceptions as well as the boundary conditions under which such indirect persuasive effects of RWP rhetoric on political persuasion take place.

To conclude, we showed that RWPP voters respond differently to metaphors and hyperboles than is oftentimes assumed (Hameleers et al., 2018; Krämer, 2014). The commonly accepted idea that voters who share a right-wing ideology respond positively to RWP rhetoric is not supported by our data. Rather, even supportive voters can be pushed away by the extreme language used by RWP politicians, in similar ways as the general population (Boeynaems et al., Chapter 4). These findings underscore the importance of testing assumptions about the persuasiveness of RWP rhetoric among different sub-groups of voters. We showed that, rather than being persuaded by RWP rhetoric, RWPP voters seem to be triggered by the promise of stronger anti-immigration policy, regardless of the way such a promise is phrased. It seems that, being heard and acknowledged in their grievances, rather than being told what to grieve about, is the main driver of RWPP support.

## REFERENCES

- Akkerman, A., Zaslove, A., & Spruyt, B. (2017). 'We the People' or 'We the Peoples'? A comparison of support for the populist radical right and populist radical left in the Netherlands. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 23, 377-403. doi:10.1111/spsr.12275
- Arcimaviciene, L., & Baglama, S. H. (2018). Migration, metaphor and myth in media representations: The ideological dichotomy of "them" and "us". *SAGE Open*, 8(2), 1-13. doi:10.1177/2158244018768657
- Arendt, F., Marquart, F., & Matthes, J. (2015). Effects of right-wing populist political advertising on implicit and explicit stereotypes. *Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications*, 27, 178-189. doi:10.1027/1864-1105
- Bankert, A., Huddy, L., & Rosema, M. (2017). Measuring partisanship as a social identity in multi-party systems. *Political Behavior*, 39, 103-132. doi:10.1007/s11109-016-9349-5
- Berning, C. C., & Schlueter, E. (2016). The dynamics of radical right-wing populist party preferences and perceived group threat: A comparative panel analysis of three competing hypotheses in the Netherlands and Germany. *Social Science Research*, 55, 83-93. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2015.09.003
- Birch, S., & Dennison, J. (2017). How protest voters choose. *Party Politics*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1354068817698857
- Boeynaems, A., Burgers, C., Konijn, E. A., & Steen, G. J. (2017). The impact of conventional and novel metaphors in news on issue viewpoint. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 2861-2879.
- Bos, L., & Brants, K. (2014). Populist rhetoric in politics and media: A longitudinal study of the Netherlands. *European Journal of Communication*, 29, 703-719. doi:10.1177/0267323114545709
- Bos, L., van der Brug, W., & de Vreese, C. H. (2013). An experimental test of the impact of style and rhetoric on the perception of right-wing populist and mainstream party leaders. *Acta Politica*, 48, 192-208. doi:10.1057/ap.2012.27
- Bowdle, B. F., & Gentner, D. (2005). The career of metaphor. *Psychological Review*, 112, 193-216. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.112.1.193
- Burgers, C., Brugman, B. C., Renardel de Lavalette, K.Y., & Steen, G. J. (2016). HIP: A method for linguistic hyperbole identification in discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 31, 163-178. doi:10.1080/10926488.2016.1187041
- Burgers, C., Konijn, E. A. and Steen, G. J. (2016). Figurative framing: Shaping public discourse through metaphor, hyperbole, and irony. *Communication Theory*, 26, 410-430. doi:10.1111/comt.12096
- Charteris-Black, J. (2006). Britain as a container: Immigration metaphors in the 2005 election campaign. *Discourse & Society*, 17, 563-581. doi:10.1177/0957926506066345
- Claridge, C. (2010). *Hyperbole in English: A corpus-based study of exaggeration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



- De Cleen, B. (2017). Populism and nationalism. In C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. Ochoa Espejo & P. Ostiguy (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of populism* (pp. 342-362). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- De Landtsheer C. (2015). Political color of metaphor, with focus on black: The rise and fall of the Flemish extreme right Vlaams Blok and Vlaams Belang. *Politics, Culture & Socialization*, 6, 85-106. doi:10.3224/pcs/v6i1-2.07
- Ditonto, T. M., Lau, R. R., & Sears, D. O. (2013). AMPing racial attitudes: Comparing the power of explicit and implicit racism measures in 2008. *Political Psychology*, 34, 487-510. doi:10.1111/pops.12013
- Doig, A., & Phythian, M. (2005). The national interest and the politics of threat exaggeration: The Blair government's case for war against Iraq. *The Political Quarterly*, 76, 368-376. doi:10.1111/j.1467923X.2005.00695.x
- Druckman, J. N., Peterson, E., & Slothuus, R. (2013). How elite partisan polarization affects public opinion formation. *American Political Science Review*, 107, 57-79. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000500>
- Elsevier (2018, March 16). Rutte kritisch op PVV-filmpje: 'Onsmakelijk' [Rutte criticizes PVV campaign movie: 'distasteful']. Retrieved from <https://www.elsevierweekblad.nl/nederland/achtergrond/2018/03/pvv-campagnefilmje-over-islam-wekt-afschuw-596623/>
- Fernandes, J. (2013). Effects of negative political advertising and message repetition on candidate evaluation. *Mass Communication and Society*, 16, 268-291. doi:10.1080/15205436.2012.672615
- Golan, G. J., Banning, S. A., & Lundy, L. (2008). Likelihood to vote, candidate choice, and the third-person effect: Behavioral implications of political advertising in the 2004 presidential election. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 52, 278-290. doi:10.1080/15205430802368621
- Hameleers, M. (2017). They did it!: The content, effects, and mechanisms of blame attribution in populist communication (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from UVA-DARE.
- Hameleers, M., Bos, L., & de Vreese, C. H. (2017). "They did it": The effects of emotionalized blame attribution in populist communication. *Communication Research*, 44, 870-900. doi:10.1177/0093650216644026
- Hameleers, M., Bos, L., & de Vreese, C. H. (2018). Selective exposure to populist communication: How attitudinal congruence drives the effects of populist attributions of blame. *Journal of Communication*, 68, 51-74. doi:10.1093/joc/jqx001
- Hamilton, M. A., & Stewart, B. L. (1993). Extending an information processing model of language intensity effects. *Communication Quarterly*, 41, 231-246. doi:10.1080/01463379309369882
- Hayes, A. F. (2017). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Heiss, R., & Matthes, J. (2017). Who 'likes' populists? Characteristics of adolescents following right-wing populist actors on Facebook. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20, 1408-1424. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328524

- Hogan, J., & Haltinner, K. (2015). Floods, invaders, and parasites: Immigration threat narratives and right-wing populism in the USA, UK and Australia. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 36, 520-543. doi:10.1080/07256868.2015.1072907
- Ivarsflaten, E. (2008). What unites right-wing populists in Western Europe? Re-examining grievance mobilization models in seven successful cases. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41, 3-23. doi:10.1177/0010414006294168
- Kalkhoven, L. D. (2015). A piece of trash of the worst cabinet ever: The rhetorical use of exaggeration by the Dutch populist party for freedom. *Politics, Culture & Socialization*, 6, 51-70. doi:10.3224/pcs.v6i1-2.05
- Kalkhoven, L. D., & De Landtsheer, C. (2016). Politics, it has never been so simple: Complex versus simplistic rhetoric and the use of hyperbole in political decision-making in the Netherlands. In P. Bursens (ed.), *Complex political decision-making: leadership, legitimacy and communication* (pp. 183-201). London: Routledge.
- Konijn, E. A., Walma van der Molen, J. H., & van Nes, S. (2009). Emotions bias perceptions of realism in audiovisual media. Why we may take fiction for real, *Discourse Processes*, 46, 309-340. doi:10.1080/01638530902728546
- Krämer, B. (2014). Media populism: A conceptual clarification and some theses on its effects. *Communication Theory*, 24, 42-60. doi:10.1111/comt.12029
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lecheler, S., Bos, L., & Vliegenthart, R. (2015). The mediating role of emotions: News framing effects on opinions about immigration. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 92, 812-838. doi:10.1177/1077699015596338
- Matthes, J., & Schmuck, D. (2017). The effects of anti-immigrant right-wing populist ads on implicit and explicit attitudes: A moderated mediation model. *Communication Research*, 44, 556-581. doi:10.1177/0093650215577859
- McCarthy, M., & Carter, R. (2004). "There's millions of them": Hyperbole in everyday conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36, 149-184. doi:10.1016/S0378-2166(03)00116-4
- McDonnell, D., & Werner, A. (2017). Respectable radicals: Why some radical right parties in the European Parliament forsake policy congruence. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25, 747-763. doi:10.1080/13501763.2017.1298659
- Metro. (2015, September 14). Wilders: Stop de asieltsunami [Wilders: Stop the tsunami of asylum seekers]. Retrieved from <https://www.metronieuws.nl/binnenland/2015/09/wilders-stop-de-asieltsunami>
- Miller, P. R., & Johnston Conover, P. (2015). Why partisan warriors don't listen: The gendered dynamics of intergroup anxiety and partisan conflict. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 3, 21-39. doi:10.1080/De 21565503.2014.992795
- Mudde. (2017). Populism: An ideational approach. In C. Rovira Kaltwasser, P. Taggart, P. Ochoa Espejo & P. Ostiguy (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of populism* (pp. 27-47). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Müller, P., Schemer, C., Wettstein, M., Schulz, A., Wirz, D. S., Engesser, S. and Wirth, W. (2017), The polarizing impact of news coverage on populist attitudes in the public:

- Evidence from a panel study in four European democracies. *Journal of Communication*, 67, 968-992. doi:10.1111/jcom.12337
- Musolff, A. (2017). Language aggression in public debates about immigration. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, 5, 175-177. doi:10.1075/jlac.5.2.01mus
- Nabi, R.L. (2009). Emotion and media effects. In R. L. Nabi, & M.B. Oliver (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of media processes and effects* (pp. 205-221). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Norrick, N. R. (2004). Hyperbole, extreme case formulation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 36, 1727-1739. doi:10.1016/j.pragma.2004.06.006
- Oesch, D. (2008). Explaining workers' support for right-wing populist parties in Western Europe: Evidence from Austria, Belgium, France, Norway, and Switzerland. *International Political Science Review*, 29, 349-373. doi:10.1177/0192512107088390
- Pierce, R. S., & Chiappe, D. L. (2008). The roles of aptness, conventionality, and working memory in the production of metaphors and similes. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 24, 1-19. doi:10.1080/10926480802568422
- Rooduijn, M., van der Brug, W., & de Lange, S. L. (2016). Expressing or fueling discontent? The relationship between populist voting and political discontent. *Electoral Studies*, 43, 32-40. doi:10.1016/j.electstud.2016.04.006
- RTL Nieuws. (2015, October 14). Pikken asielzoekers echt onze huizen in? [Are asylum seekers stealing our houses?]. Retrieved from [www.rtlnieuws.nl/nieuws/binnenland/pikken-asielzoekers-echt-onze-huizen](http://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nieuws/binnenland/pikken-asielzoekers-echt-onze-huizen)
- Rydgren, J. (2008). Immigration sceptics, xenophobes or racists? Radical right-wing voting in six West European countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 47, 737-765. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6765.2008.00784.x
- Steen, G. J. (2011). Metaphor, language, and discourse processes. *Discourse Processes*, 48, 585-591. doi:10.1080/0163853X.2011.606424
- Steen, G. J., Dorst, A.G., Hermann, B., Kaal, A., Krennmayr, T., & Pasma, T. (2010). *A Method for Linguistic Metaphor Identification: From MIP to MIPVU*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins
- Stockemer, D., & Barisione, M. (2017). The 'new' discourse of the Front National under Marine Le Pen: A slight change with a big impact. *European Journal of Communication*, 32, 100-115. doi:10.1177/0267323116680132
- Tajfel, H. (1981). Social stereotypes and social groups. In J. C. Turner & H. Giles (Eds.), *Intergroup behaviour* (pp. 144-167). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- The New York Times (2016, September 20). Donald Trump Jr. compares Syrian refugees to Skittles that 'would kill you'. Retrieved from [www.nytimes.com/2016/09/21/us/politics/donald-trump-jr-faces-backlash-after-comparing-syrian-refugees-to-skittles-that-can-kill.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/21/us/politics/donald-trump-jr-faces-backlash-after-comparing-syrian-refugees-to-skittles-that-can-kill.html)
- Thibodeau, P. H., & Durgin, F. H. (2011). Metaphor aptness and conventionality: A processing fluency account. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 26, 206-226. doi:10.1080/10926488.2011.583196
- Tryon, W. W. (2005). Possible mechanisms for why desensitization and exposure therapy work. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 25, 67-95. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2004.08.005

- van Spanje, J. (2010). Contagious parties: Anti-immigration parties and their impact on other parties' immigration stances in contemporary *Western Europe*. *Party Politics*, 16, 563-586.  
doi:10.1177/1354068809346002
- van Spanje, J., & van der Brug, W. (2009). Being intolerant of the intolerant. The exclusion of Western European anti-immigration parties and its consequences for party choice. *Acta Politica*, 44, 353-384.
- Wagner, M., & Meyer, T. M. (2017). The radical right as niche parties? The ideological landscape of party systems in Western Europe, 1980–2014. *Political Studies*, 65, 84-107.  
doi:10.1177/0032321716639065
- Westfall, J., Van Boven, L., Chambers, J. R., & Judd, C. M. (2015). Perceiving political polarization in the United States: Party identity strength and attitude extremity exacerbate the perceived partisan divide. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10, 145-158. doi:10.1177/1745691615569849
- Wirz, D. S. (2018). Persuasion through emotion? An experimental test of the emotion-eliciting nature of populist communication. *International Journal of Communication*, 12, 1114-1138.

