

RESEARCH-IN-BRIEF

Campaigning subtle exclusionism: The effects of right-wing populist positive ads on attitudes toward foreigners in Austria

Subtile Exklusion: Die Wirkung positiver rechtspopulistischer Plakatwerbung auf Einstellungen gegenüber Ausländern in Österreich

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Abstract: While most right-wing populist parties use negative political ads that openly attack foreigners and immigrants, some have begun to frame their campaigns more positively. This study examines the 2013 poster campaign on ‘brotherly love’ by the Austrian Freedom Party, which preaches love only for fellow countrymen, excluding foreign citizens. A quota-based experiment reveals that this campaign yields interesting effects on attitudes: Party opponents and ambivalent voters reacted with more negative campaign evaluations and less patriotic feelings. This, in turn, strengthened positive attitudes toward foreigners. Party supporters were unaffected by the poster advertisements.

Keywords: Right-wing populism, political campaigning, patriotism, anti-immigrant attitudes, Austria.

Zusammenfassung: Viele rechtspopulistische Parteien in Europa greifen in ihrer Wahlwerbung auf die negative Stereotypisierung von Migranten zurück. Einige verfolgen jedoch eine subtilere Strategie und setzen auf positive und patriotische Inhalte. Die vorliegende Studie befasst sich mit der Kampagne der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) aus dem Nationalratswahlkampf 2013, in der „Nächstenliebe“ für österreichische Mitbürger gefordert, Ausländern jedoch verwehrt wird. Die Ergebnisse eines quotierten Online-Experiments zeigen, dass diese Kampagne interessante Effekte auf die Einstellungen der Rezipienten hat: Gegner der FPÖ und unentschiedene Wähler werden durch die Plakate abgeschreckt und fühlen sich weniger patriotisch. Diese Wirkungen wiederum verstärken die positive Einstellung gegenüber Ausländern, während Unterstützer der FPÖ nicht beeinflusst werden.

Schlagwörter: Rechtspopulismus, politische Werbung, Patriotismus, ausländerfeindliche Einstellungen, Österreich.

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1. Introduction

In many European countries, right-wing populist (RWP) parties are renowned for making excessive use of political campaigns that attack foreigners and depict immigrants in an aggressively negative and stereotypic way (e.g., Betz, 2013; Wodak, 2013). As one dominant form of political advertising in Europe, parties' posters are rather inescapable and gain a fair amount of attention during election campaigns (Kaid, 2012; Seidman, 2008). While most RWP parties rely on proclaiming their positions toward immigrants very explicitly (e.g., Rydgren, 2007), some have worked with more subtle claims: For the 2013 parliamentary election, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) launched a campaign in which the Christian principle of ‘Loving thy neighbor’ was applied. In deliberately using this term, the FPÖ accentuated that while ‘our’ Austrian citizens are to be taken care of and included into the party's providence, ‘other’ people are excluded from it. The Freedom Party thus applied a form of superficial inclusionary and patriotic rhetoric that is exclusionary as well (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), but less explicit than it has been in previous campaigns (e.g., AFP, 2012). This strategy could not only appeal to voters favoring the Freedom Party, but non-supporters alike, as it potentially aims at creating a common identity and activating patriotic feel-

ings in contrast to being openly xenophobic in nature. This is especially noteworthy as one might argue that, in order to be taken seriously and eligible as a legitimate political alternative, any RWP party should retain a low profile on issues that might make the party appear as extremist or anti-democratic (Blinder, Ford, & Ivarsflaten, 2013; Bos & Van der Brug, 2010; Mendelberg, 2001). Whether or not these campaigns court to a larger audience and affect attitudes toward foreigners is a question open to scientific investigation.

While the electoral performance of right-wing populist parties has attracted a fair share of research (e.g., Arzheimer, 2009; Eatwell, 2003; Ford & Goodwin, 2010; Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002), studies have hardly been concerned with the impact of their political advertising, with few exceptions (e.g., Appel, 2012; Matthes & Marquart, 2013; Matthes & Schmuck, 2015; Schemer, 2012; Schmuck & Matthes, 2015). Even more so, research on the effects of positively valenced RWP ads are rare (Arendt, Marquart, & Matthes, 2013). Furthermore, previous research mostly relied on student samples, with stimuli being artificially constructed for the sake of internal validity. We provide data from a quota-based sample of the Austrian population participating in an online experiment prior to the national election. Using real ads as employed during the campaign, we tested the effects of the 2013 FPÖ posters on citizens' attitudes toward foreigners, taking into account the mediating roles of patriotism and campaign evaluation for proponents, opponents, and ambivalent voters alike. As such, we aim at identifying whether positively valenced RWP

ads affect voters in different ways depending on their evaluation of the party.

2. Right-wing populism and political advertising

Studies addressing the electoral success of Western European right-wing populist parties have been concerned with both their demand (e.g., Ford & Goodwin, 2010; Lubbers et al., 2002) and supply side (e.g., Bos, 2012; Rydgren, 2007; Van der Brug & Mughan, 2007). Yet hardly any research has been systematically concerned with the way in which these parties promote their ideology to the electorate. While the role of the news media has gained a fair amount of scholarly attention in explaining RWP parties' success (e.g., Akkerman, 2011; Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Burscher, van Spanje, & de Vreese, 2015), communication science knows little about the effects of their political ads. In Western Europe, party positions and ideologies are advertised via political posters which predominate public spaces especially prior to elections (Kaid, 2012; Seidman, 2008) and claim up to 40% of parties' advertising budget (Plasser & Plasser, 2002). In line with this importance, posters and print ads were also the most important means of parties' campaigning in the 2013 Austrian national election (Dolezal & Zeglovits, 2014), and voters have been extensively exposed to them in the weeks leading up to the exit polls. However, we argue that voter turnout is not the sole relevant outcome variable in this regard: Western European RWP parties' election programmes and political advertising mostly focus on policies di-

rected against immigration and foreign citizens (e.g., Appel, 2012; Betz, 2013). Given the importance of party posters in Europe, research should address the question whether RWP parties' campaigns may affect viewers' position on political issues – in this case, attitudes toward foreigners. Prior research suggests that *party evaluation* is an important moderator in determining a campaign's efficiency in this regard.

2.1 Party evaluation moderates political advertising effects

Strong partisans make up their mind early on in a campaign and reach a ceiling effect (Franz & Ridout, 2007) in both the intention to vote for and (positive) evaluation of their own party. In contrast to that, supporters of an opposing party carry very sound political convictions in their negative attitude toward the advertising party and cannot easily be persuaded to switch positions. Consequently, when it comes to voting intentions, undecided voters are the most likely to be affected by political advertising (Iyengar & Simon, 2000; Hillygus & Jackman, 2003; Pattie & Johnston, 2012), and similar reasoning may be applied to the evaluation of specific political issues. Party labels may serve as a relevant heuristic cue in this decision making process (Kam, 2005), as they allow citizens to evaluate political issues through the "partisan lens" (Goren, Federico, & Kittilson, 2009, p. 806) and to base their judgement on the familiar position of their party evaluation. Such cues are also more likely to affect *opponents* as opposed to proponents (Goren et al., 2009): When confronted with political messages by a party

which citizens dislike, *non*-supporters are more likely to reject the message content – especially when the party’s ideology is in clear opposition to their own (Cohen, 2003; Goren et al., 2009; Kam, 2005; Nicholson, 2012). This argument is also in line with research on psychological reactance (Brehm & Brehm, 1981): If people are exposed to persuasive attempts, they may feel threatened in their individual freedom of choice and try to regain their independence. Research shows that this process may be transferred to political advertising as well:

“[If] an attitude is threatened by a persuasive political ad, a person may attempt to restore freedom by derogating the source of the ad, reject the ad message, and continue to hold his or her original opinion about the candidates and issues” (Meirick & Nisbett, 2011, p. 671).

Importantly, reactance is more likely to be raised if individuals feel distant to the advertiser (Silvia, 2005), as it is the case with a political party voters dislike (Matland & Murray, 2012; Meirick & Nisbett, 2011). As a consequence of the outlined processes, *non*-supporters may take clear opposition to an issue because it is advocated by a party they strongly dislike. We therefore theorize that opponents of the FPÖ react to the poster ads in a negative way and repulse the campaign’s issue position.

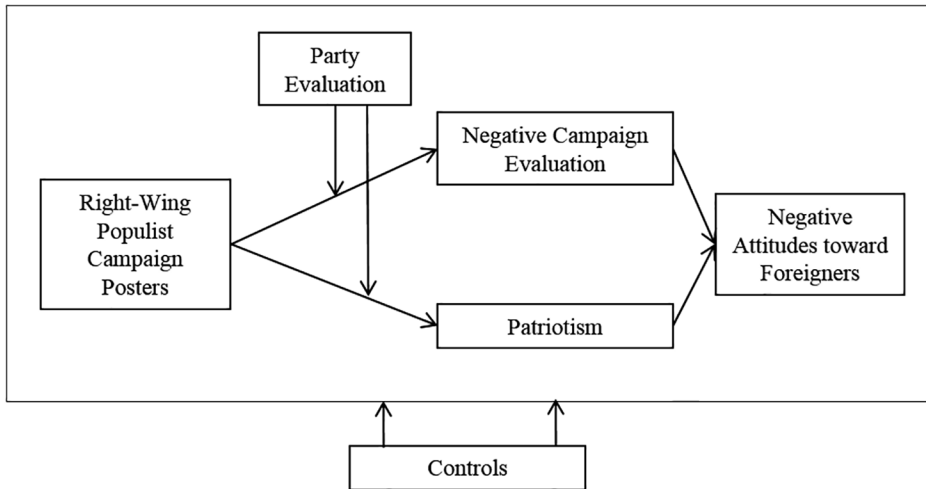
2.2 Patriotism and ad evaluation as mediators

During the 2013 campaign, the Freedom Party focused on advertising a message that stressed the importance of brotherly love for Austrian citizens. We understand this campaign to be im-

plicitly exclusionary in nature (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012), that is, strengthening the role of the national ingroup by implicitly excluding foreigners (as opposed to being openly exclusionary), thus relying on a positively valenced content. Importantly, we expect exposure to the campaign to enhance feelings of patriotism in viewers: Patriotism refers to the “noncompetitive love of and commitment to one’s country” in connection with a feeling of “pride over its traditions and accomplishments” (Kemmelmeyer & Winter, 2008, p. 863). Even though patriotic attitudes are relatively stable over time (e.g., Depuiset & Butera, 2003), they can be primed by relevant indicators: For example, research by Gangl and colleagues (2015) provides evidence for a successful manipulation of cues that prime patriotic attitudes, and Kemmelmeier and Winter (2008) found exposure to the American flag to increase positive attitudes toward the United States. In line with these results, we argue that if individuals encounter the FPÖ posters stressing the importance of Austrian citizenship, patriotic cues become more accessible in their memory. Viewing the RWP ads should thus prime patriotic attitudes in viewers. Such patriotism, in turn, can be theorized to be related to negative attitudes toward foreigners (e.g., Dunn, 2015; Jeong, 2013; Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009).

In addition, we believe people’s evaluation of the advertising campaign to mediate the posters’ effects: Studies in (political) advertising research have found ad exposure to influence attitudes toward objects (i.e., products, parties, persons) or messages by shaping people’s attitudes toward the ad (e.g., Brown & Stayman, 1992; Coulter,

Figure 1: Conceptual moderated mediation model.



2008; Jin, An, & Simon, 2009): If individuals evaluate the ad in a positive manner, they may be more likely to follow the message compared to those who like it less.

In sum, we expect both patriotism and attitudes toward the Freedom Party's poster ads to mediate the campaign's influence on negative attitudes toward foreigners. Such effects are likely to vary for a party's proponents and opponents: The effects of campaign exposure on patriotism and ad evaluation should be moderated by prior party evaluation. This is to say that those in favour of the FPÖ should react with increased patriotism and increased ad liking compared to those who oppose the party. Ad liking and patriotism should then affect attitudes toward foreigners.

3. Hypotheses and research question

All hypotheses are visualized in figure 1. In line with the reasoning outlined above, we expect party evaluation to moderate the effects of positively va-

lenced RWP political poster ads on citizens' evaluation of the campaign and the priming of patriotic feelings. Both ad evaluation and patriotism should then mediate viewers' negative attitudes toward foreigners.

H1: Exposure to the RWP advertisements leads to a favourable evaluation of the ads in proponents (H1a) and an unfavourable evaluation in opponents (H1b).

H2: Exposure to the RWP advertisements increases feelings of patriotism in proponents (H2a) and decreases patriotism in opponents (H2b).

H3: Patriotism positively affects negative attitudes toward foreigners.

H4: Negative attitude toward the ad will lead to less negative attitudes toward foreigners.

According to the research outlined above (e.g., Iyengar & Simon, 2000; Pattie & Johnston, 2012), ambivalent voters (i.e. individuals evaluating the party as neither clearly favourable nor unfavourable) are especially likely to

be affected by political advertising in their attitudes toward the issue, because they neither reach the proposed ceiling effect of strong supporters, nor do they reject the party cue due to a “negativity bias” or reactance (Goren et al., 2009, p. 807; see also Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Franz & Ridout, 2007). Research would therefore hint at the possibility of the FPÖ campaign to alter indecisive voters’ attitudes toward foreigners, because the campaign relies on an implicit exclusionary strategy as opposed to openly attacking immigrants. Hence, citizens could reflect on the posters’ content and may show a persuasion effect in the direction of the FPÖ-ideology. Because this relationship has not been documented before, we investigate it in an additional research question:

RQ1: How do ambivalent voters react to the RWP ads with regard to a) campaign evaluation, b) the activation of patriotic feelings, and c) negative attitudes toward foreigners?

4. Method

We tested the proposed hypotheses and research question using an experimental design with one factor (exposure to FPÖ campaign posters) and two conditions. A total of $N = 286$ Austrian citizens took part in the online experiment; they were recruited via an access panel by Survey Sampling International (SSI) and received incentives for partaking. Data collection lasted for 1,5 weeks and was terminated shortly before Election Day (29th of September, 2013). Participants were recruited following quota assignments; the sample can be deemed representative for the Austrian population and did not

differ between conditions in terms of age (ranged 18–74, $M = 44.87$; $SD = 14.5$; $t(284) = -.184$, $p = .854$), gender (48.3% male; $\chi^2(1) = .48$, $p = .283$) and education (16,4% compulsory schooling, 36,4% apprenticeship, 30,4% A-levels or equivalent, 16,8% university degree or higher; $\chi^2(3) = 1.24$, $p = .742$).

Individuals were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental groups. In the treatment group ($n = 139$), participants saw four posters of the FPÖ, two of which were used in the ongoing ‘brotherly love’ election campaign (see figure 2). The other two ads were constructed from former motives and bare great resemblance to the current campaign. In addition, participants viewed two of the latest political posters both from the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) and Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ). These were inserted to disguise the purpose of the study and to simulate a real world campaign situation. In the control group ($n = 147$), participants saw the same four political ads from the ÖVP and SPÖ, but no FPÖ posters. Instead, four distractor ads for unrelated products (e.g., coffee, ice cream) were shown. After seeing and briefly rating the randomized posters, participants were asked to answer a survey and given a short debriefing before finishing.

4.1 Measures

A path model was estimated as visualized in figure 1. The values for the focal independent variables and the moderator were mean-centered. The dependent variable, negative attitudes toward foreigners, was measured with four items (e.g., ‘The high amount of foreign citizens in Austria is frighten-

Figure 2: Stimulus ads.



Notes: Top row: Original ads from the 2013 FPÖ campaign on brotherly love (copyright: Austrian Freedom Party). Bottom row: Additional ads constructed for the experimental design (original copyright: Austrian Freedom Party). Text: “Liebe deine Nächsten. Für mich sind das unsere Österreicher. Höchste Zeit für ‘Nächstenliebe’” [“Love your neighbour. For me, these are our Austrians. High time for ‘Brotherly love’”].

ing’; $\alpha = .92$; 1 = do not agree at all, 7 = do totally agree; $M = 4.65$, $SD = 1.91$). Two mediating variables were of relevance in our model: Patriotism was measured using five items (e.g., ‘I perceive my Austrian citizenship to be an important part of my personality’; $\alpha = .91$; $M = 5.65$, $SD = 1.35$; e.g., Jeong, 2013), and negative campaign evaluation with two items (e.g., ‘To be honest, this “Brotherly love” campaign made me angry’, $\alpha = .75$; $M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.92$). Items for the two mediators were assessed on a 7-point scale each. Finally, party evaluation as a moderator was gauged by asking for a general assessment of the Freedom Party (ranging from 1 = very negative to 7 = very positive; $M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.96$). In all analyses, party evaluation was treated as a continuous variable.

In addition to standard socio-demographic variables, we controlled for participants’ contact to foreign citizens (4 items, interaction with foreigners in

the family, with friends, within the neighbourhood, and at work/school; $\alpha = .71$; $M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.63$, 1 = never; 7 = very often) and their country of origin (88,8% Austria). Finally, we checked for participants’ prior exposure to the FPÖ posters (1 = never seen before, 7 = seen very often; $M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.84$). Only 5,9% of our sample stated that they had never encountered the campaign before.

5. Results

5.1 Preliminary analysis

In a first step, we analyzed the main effects of our model: Exposure to the RWP ads negatively affected viewers’ patriotic attitudes ($b = -.38$, $p < .05$), but did not significantly influence their negative evaluation of the campaign ($b = -.07$, *ns*) or negative attitudes toward foreigners ($b = -.14$, *ns*; see Table 1). On the other hand, prior expo-

Table 1: Effects of individual variables and experimental manipulation on negative attitudes toward foreigners.

	Negative campaign evaluation	Patriotism	Negative attitudes toward foreigners
	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)	<i>b</i> (<i>SE</i>)
Sex	.04 (.19)	-.06 (.15)	-.35 (.18)
Age	-.01 (.01)	.02 (.01)**	.01 (.01)
Education	-.02 (.10)	-.07 (.08)	-.28 (.10)**
Country of origin	.09 (.39)	.59 (.31)	.31 (.36)
Prior exposure to the campaign	.02 (.05)	.13 (.04)**	-.07 (.05)
Contact to foreigners	.16 (.06)*	-.01 (.05)	-.09 (.06)
Ad exposure	-.07 (.19)	-.38 (.15)*	-.14 (.18)
Party evaluation	-.54 (.05)***	.12 (.04)**	.43 (.06)***
Ad exposure * Party evaluation	-.20 (.10)*	.16 (.08)*	-.02 (.09)
Negative campaign evaluation	–	–	-.15 (.06)**
Patriotism	–	–	.23 (.07)***

Notes: Unstandardized path coefficients. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

sure to the posters made viewers feel more patriotic in general (*b* = .13, *p* < .01). Age significantly, albeit weakly, affected patriotism (*b* = .02, *p* < .01). Finally, the more educated participants were, the more positively they felt about foreigners (*b* = -.28, *p* < .01), and the more contact they had to foreign citizens, the less they liked the FPÖ campaign (*b* = .16, *p* < .05).

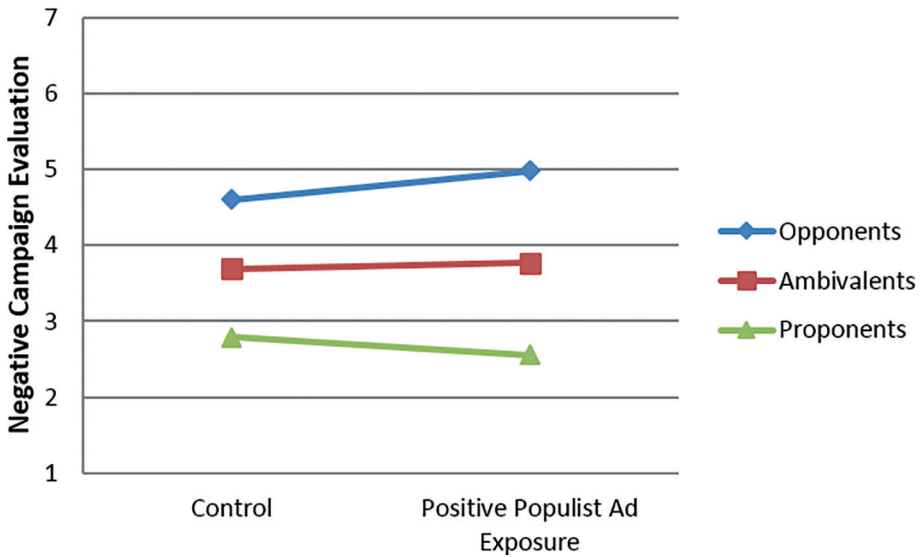
5.2 Hypotheses Testing

We hypothesized that the effects of the ‘brotherly love’ ads on campaign evaluation and evoked feelings of patriotism depend on voters’ party evaluation. In line with this prediction, we found significant interaction effects of ad exposure and party evaluation on both negative ad evaluation (*b* = -.20, *p* < .05) and patriotism (*b* = .16, *p* < .05). The interaction effects are visualized in Figures 3 and 4. As further probing of those interactions reveals, opponents of the FPÖ as well as ambivalent voters reacted with a negative

evaluation of the campaign and less patriotism. For supporters, no significant effect of the campaign on neither ad evaluation nor patriotism was detectable. Therefore, H1b and H2b are supported, whereas H1a and H2a are not. In addition to the interaction effects, we found strong main effects of party evaluation on negative campaign evaluation (*b* = -.54, *p* < .001) and patriotism (*b* = .12, *p* < .01): Those participants in favor of the FPÖ felt generally less critical of the campaign and more patriotic.

In the next step, we tested whether negative campaign evaluation and patriotism were related to the negative evaluation of foreigners (table 1). In line with predictions, the former significantly affected the latter (H4): Individuals who disliked the campaign felt more positively about foreigners (*b* = -.15, *p* < .01). We found no interaction effect of party evaluation and ad exposure on attitudes toward foreigners (*b* = -.02, *ns*). These findings indicate that the effect of the FPÖ’s positive ads on attitudes to-

Figure 3: Effects of positive RWP ads on negative campaign evaluation, moderated by party evaluation.

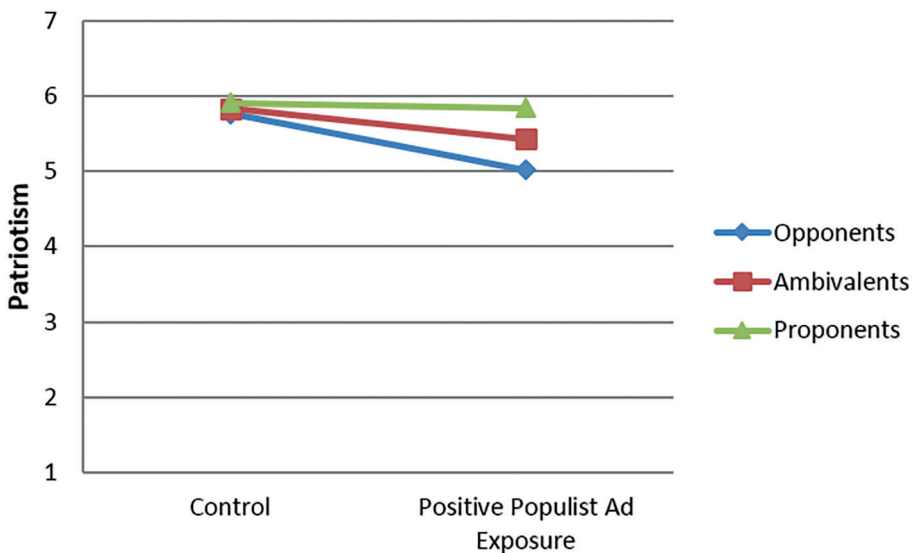


ward foreign citizens is moderated by party evaluation and mediated by negative campaign evaluation. In other words, opponents of the FPÖ reacted with negative attitudes toward the ad in

response to the campaign, and as a consequence, their attitudes toward foreigners became more positive.

A similar pattern of findings emerged for patriotism: There was a

Figure 4: Effects of positive RWP ads on patriotism, moderated by party evaluation.



strong and significant effect of patriotism on negative attitudes toward foreigners ($b = .23$, $p < .001$), suggesting that opponents of the party decreased in their patriotic views when they were exposed to the right-wing populist ads. This, in turn, led to more positive attitudes toward foreigners. When tested in a conditional process model, the indirect effect of ad exposure on negative attitudes toward foreigners (mediated by patriotism) is significant for opponents of the FPÖ (i.e., one standard deviation below mean, $b = -.19$, $p = .018$) as well as ambivalent voters ($b = -.10$, $p = .044$). However, negative evaluation of the ‘brotherly love’ campaign does not fully mediate the effect of ad exposure on anti-foreigner attitudes: While ad exposure affects campaign liking (moderated by party evaluation; see table 1) and these attitudes in turn influence attitudes toward foreigners, the overall indirect effect is not significant for either ideological group.

Finally, in answering our research question, ambivalent voters were affected by campaign exposure in the same way as opponents of the party were: They evaluated the poster ads more negatively and felt less patriotic than participants in the control group (see figures 3 and 4). Moreover, the indirect effect of ad exposure on negative attitudes toward foreigners over patriotism is significant for undecided voters as well. As such, ambivalent individuals do not differ from people that dislike the FPÖ in their overall campaign reaction.

6. Discussion

This study investigated the effects of implicitly exclusionary right-wing populist ads on attitudes toward foreign-

ers. In applying a quota-based experimental design, we tested whether the Austrian Freedom Party’s 2013 campaign on ‘brotherly love’ affected people with different attitudes toward the party in varying manners. Our results shed light on some interesting perspectives regarding the effectiveness of such positively valenced campaigns.

In line with previous research (Goren et al., 2009; Kam, 2005; Meirick & Nisbett, 2011), we find that individuals who dislike the FPÖ as well as ambivalent voters were repelled by the ads’ messages in general, somewhat irrespective of the campaign’s overall positive content. As such, even positively connoted political ads which might aim at attracting a larger electorate have to bypass ideological barriers, and viewers do not easily adopt the advertised message: When confronted with the FPÖ posters, opponents reacted with lower feelings of patriotism, which in turn (as in an act of reactance, Brehm & Brehm, 1981) resulted in more positive attitudes toward foreigners. That is to say that contrary to what may have been the goal of this campaign, neither opponents nor ambivalent voters were persuaded by the message’s subtle exclusionism.

Yet supporters of the FPÖ were unaffected by the campaign: Neither did they evaluate the ads more positively, nor did they adopt the patriotic feelings advertised in the posters. These non-findings might be attributable to a ceiling effect (Franz & Ridout, 2007), similar to the one observable for voting intentions: Because supporters evaluate the campaign positively anyway, small variance remains for a further boost in ad evaluation. Regarding campaign evaluation, patriotism and negative attitudes toward foreigners,

party evaluation of the FPÖ remains the strongest predictor. Compared to that, the effects of ad exposure were rather marginal.

6.1 Limitations

This study has several limitations, the first of which concerns our experimental design: Since the control group did not see any posters of the FPÖ at all, but unrelated product ads, we cannot account for possible priming effects of the party (logo and/or chairman) itself. However, the experimental manipulation applied here relied on real posters of all parties, which were at the same time visible throughout Austria. Therefore, adding fake posters would have led to a decrease in external validity, as participants might have identified them as not being real. Moreover, the message on brotherly love was clearly the dominant component of the ad, and prior exposure to the FPÖ posters was statistically controlled for. Nevertheless, future studies should control for additional influences in this regard as well, for example by simultaneously testing the effects of both a positive and negative political campaign (see below).

Second, due to reasons of feasibility, participants in the study were confronted with the poster ads on a computer screen, which unarguably does not compare to seeing them on the street. We partly accounted for this drawback by employing poster ads of an ongoing campaign and controlling for previous ad exposure. In line with this, our results reveal that prior exposure to the campaign positively and significantly affects patriotic attitudes ($b = .13, p = .003$). This could indicate that a prolonged exposure to the RWP ads during the course of a political

campaign (i.e., several weeks) raises patriotism in viewers. However, due to the nature of our methodological design, we cannot rule out the possibility that people who feel more patriotic in the first place were also more aware of the campaign. For that reason, we strongly encourage future studies to employ a longitudinal design to test for causal effects in this regard.

Third, our analysis yielded significant results only for some hypotheses, and we deem the size of our sample to be partly attributable for that. As proponents and supporters of the FPÖ as well as ambivalent voters were taken into consideration, group sizes were quite small when comparing the experimental conditions. Future research should therefore aim at achieving greater sample size. In addition to that, we did not look at the effects of a party's poster campaign on citizens' voting intentions. While turnout unarguably is an important dependent variable in political communication sciences, prior evidence suggests that xenophobic political advertising by RWP parties affects viewers' implicit and explicit stereotypes of immigrants (e.g., Arendt, et al., 2015). Therefore, we deem attitudes toward foreigners an important outcome variable when studying the impact of right-wing populist ads that employ a more subtle form of exclusionism.

In line with that, we encourage future studies to incorporate posters of a RWP anti-immigrant (i.e. explicitly exclusionary) campaign, in order to compare the effects of two opposing strategies. Relying on the evidence provided here as well as on previous work, negative ad effects on ideological opponents of a RWP party can be even more strongly pronounced when the

messages openly attack foreign citizens instead of relying on implicit anti-immigrant cues ‘only’ (see also Arendt et al., 2015). Given the inclusionary nature of the campaign tested in this study, we would also expect reactance (i.e., a strong negative reaction to a persuasive attempt that may derogate the ads’ sponsor) to be more heavily pronounced for persuasive attempts that openly attack immigrants: Messages that are less explicit in nature should result in less reactance than information that is in clear opposition to viewers’ own views (Burgoon, Alvaro, Grandpre, & Vouladakis, 2002). In line with this, one could also theorize that attitudes toward the ad would be lower for opponents of the advertising party if the campaign used an explicit strategy directed against foreigners. These questions remain open for further investigation.

Finally, we believe negative reactions in opponents of the Freedom Party to emerge due to an effect of reactance (e.g., Brehm & Brehm, 1981), but we cannot unequivocally attribute the results obtained here to such a process, as we did not directly test individuals’ reactance. While our measurement of negative campaign evaluation (e.g., ‘To be honest, this “Brotherly love” campaign made me angry’) connects well to the assumption that reactance can be theorized to be a combination of (negative) cognitions and anger (e.g., Dillard & Shen, 2005; Meirick & Nisbett, 2011), future research should take a closer look at these processes.

6.2 Conclusion

When it comes to the nurturing of negative feelings toward immigrants, changing their political advertising

strategy from an openly anti-immigrant content to a more subtle form of exclusionism did not pay off for the right-wing populist Austrian Freedom Party. Opponents of the party still feel repelled by their messages, and are not persuaded in the direction of the issue position by an alleged patriotic and inclusionary content. Even more so, opponents rigidly refuse to apply the anti-immigrant attitudes that are implicitly included in the statement, resulting in *improved* attitudes toward foreigners. Similar effects emerged for ambivalent voters. This study has been the first to document these effects during the course of an ongoing political campaign. It shows that citizens are not easily persuaded by populist political ads: Even if the messages’ content tries to court a larger population by communicating exclusionary messages in a very subtle manner, voters may question the persuasive intention and – indirectly – punish the sponsor.

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