Crime Story: The role of crime and immigration in the anti-immigration vote

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\section*{ABSTRACT}

Some scholars have found that mass immigration fuels the success of anti-immigration parties, whereas others have found that it does not. In this paper, we propose a reason for these contradictory results. We advance a set of hypotheses that revolves around a commonly ignored factor, crime. To test these hypotheses, we examine a setting where an anti-immigration party, the LPF, participated in simultaneous elections in all Dutch municipalities, which form a single constituency. According to our results, the impact of immigration rates on the individual vote for the LPF only manifests itself among those voters who are very 'tough on crime'. In addition, we demonstrate that high local crime rates make an anti-immigration vote more likely, but only among voters who are very 'tough on immigration'. This suggests that immigration and crime rates do not make all citizens more likely to cast an anti-immigration vote, but only those who perceive a link between the two issues. Thus, if one wishes to reduce anti-immigration leaders' electoral support, countering their criminalization of immigrants may be a more fruitful strategy than trying to stop immigration – if at all possible.

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\section*{1. Introduction}

Anti-immigration parties (e.g., Gibson, 2002; Van der Brug et al., 2005) have emerged in most established democracies. Some scholars have found an influence of mass immigration on the electoral performance of these parties (e.g., Golder, 2003; Knigge, 1998; Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Coffé et al., 2007), whereas others have not found evidence for this (e.g., Chapin, 1992; Van der Brug et al., 2005). What accounts for these contradictory findings? In this paper, we suggest that a reason for this may lie in the conditionalities of the effect of immigration on anti-immigration voting. We focus on the main conditionality we see, that of a perceived link between immigration and crime. We argue and demonstrate empirically that immigration rates do not make just any voter more inclined to cast an anti-immigration vote but mainly those who, firstly, associate immigrants and crime, and, secondly, are 'tough' on crime.

Studying the influence of crime and immigration rates on voting behavior requires high-quality and adequate data. In order to draw valid inferences on this topic, it is crucial to have a high degree of comparability between units. To ensure this, we focus on a single anti-immigration party only. Ideally, we would have crime and immigration rates at a very low level of aggregation, units which have been shown to matter for anti-immigration voting, such as neighborhoods and municipalities (Coffé et al., 2007). To make it even more ideal, we would have to study a party that was competing in an electoral system where all the lower-level units together form one constituency so as to maximize comparability between these units. Furthermore, both the adequate aggregate- and individual-level data on a representative sample of the electorate should

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be available in the country where the party competes. These data should contain both individual-level voter preferences concerning crime policy and immigration policy (as well as all the relevant controls) and objective indicators of crime and immigration rates of the context where each individual lives. At the same time, this party should be electorally successful, so as to avoid small-N problems at the individual-level analysis.

A case that meets all these criteria is the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in the Netherlands in 2002. The fact that the Netherlands is organized as a single constituency provides us with a unique opportunity to compare the party’s performance in multiple lower-level units the country is composed of. We collect neighborhood-level data (N = 685) and link these to the 2002 Dutch Parliamentary Elections Study (N = 1,314) in order to test our crime impact hypotheses formulated below.

Rather than exerting a homogenous impact among voters of any given area, we find that it is only when particular attitudinal configurations are present that the ethnic composition of a given region leads to anti-immigration voting. This interaction of aggregate- and individual-level determinants enhances our understanding about the mechanism that fuels anti-immigration party support.

More importantly, in this paper we propose a different way of thinking about the origins of this phenomenon. Apart from perceiving immigrants as potential competitors either in the labor market or in their cultural traditions, people who live in ethnically diverse areas opt for these parties as a reaction to what they perceive as a threat against law and order. By the same token, living in areas with high crime rates boosts anti-immigration party support only among those who hold negative feelings against immigrants, presumably by perceiving them as the primary source for this problem.

This paper will proceed in the following way. We first present the key findings from the existing literature. We then theorize about the role of criminalization of immigrants in anti-immigration party voting. We discuss the controls to be used in a separate section. In the section thereafter we report the data employed as well as the methods used for the estimation of the key parameters of interest. We then present our results, the robustness of which is tested in the penultimate section. The last section concludes.

1.1. Previous work

We briefly summarize the existing theoretical accounts regarding the relationship between immigration and the anti-immigration vote. Where a vote for an anti-immigration party is a vote against mass immigration, higher immigration rates are expected to make voters more likely to cast such a vote. Although the empirical evidence is inconclusive on this point, many scholars have made theoretical arguments concerning this link. Two different types of theories can be distinguished, to which Golder refers as “materialist” and “ideational”. The materialist theory builds on the idea that immigration poses an economic threat to the native population (Golder, 2003: 438–9). This idea is linked to what is called the theory of economic interest (see also Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000; Lubbers et al., 2002).

According to this theory, the native people have to compete with immigrant workers for scarce resources such as employment and housing (see also Kriesi et al., 2006). At least, they would perceive a threat to their socio-economic position, and are therefore likely to develop hostile attitudes toward immigrants. In addition, they can be considered to have an interest in very restrictive immigration policies. It is usually the less well-educated and the unemployed who are hypothesized to be more likely to vote for anti-immigration parties (see also Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2010). This is because these are the citizens who face the fiercest competition with immigrant groups. Although there is no strong evidence that immigration would actually cause unemployment, it may be sufficient that voters believe that such a link exists (see also Golder, 2003: 438).

A second type of argumentation, which Golder calls “ideational”, holds that immigration poses a cultural threat (Golder, 2003: 439–41). It has been claimed that the native population feels threatened by the mixing with foreign cultures that mass immigration entails. Natives may perceive mass immigration as challenging the dominant position of their culture, and, with this, several symbolic and materialist benefits that this dominant position brings along (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007).

Golder also states an “instrumental” hypothesis, which concerns the electoral system. However, this is not relevant for our study, as the electoral system factor is a constant: we examine one particular country at one particular point in time.

This seems to be the case, as, for instance, relatively many Northern League (LN) voters in Italy perceive immigrants as causing unemployment (Ignazi, 2003: 59). Other anti-immigration parties, such as the Freedom Party of Austria (Ignazi, 2003: 114) and the French FN (Golder, 2003: 438), also try to link foreigners with unemployment.
Some studies have concluded that immigration increases anti-immigration voting. Anderson reported on the basis of monthly opinion poll data from 1980 to 1990 that the vote intention for the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties was affected by the number of foreign-born residents in these countries (Anderson, 1996: 504–5). Knigge found that high immigration levels are conducive to anti-immigration party voting. In a cross-national over-time study using aggregated data derived from the Eurobarometer survey in six EU member states (1984–1993, \( N = 114 \)), she reported a positive effect of the annual number of immigrants entering a country (in proportion to the country’s total population) on anti-immigration party support (Knigge, 1998: 262, 270, 272). Golder found the same in a study including 165 elections in 19 West European countries between 1970 and 2000. He demonstrated that large proportions of immigrants, on itself and in interaction with high unemployment levels, increased the vote shares of anti-immigration parties (Golder, 2003). Similarly, Coffé et al. concluded in a recent study that in 1999, the Flemish Bloc (VB) in Belgium was more successful in municipalities with large proportions of non-western immigrants than in other municipalities (Coffé et al., 2007: 152–3).

Other studies, however, have resulted in negative findings about the relationship between mass immigration and anti-immigration voting. In a study across countries and over-time, Van der Brug et al. found no effect of immigration. Using the same operationalization of immigration as Knigge, the number of asylum applications relative to the total population, they found that the electoral fortunes of 13 anti-immigration parties in nine countries between 1989 and 1999 (\( N = 25 \) party–year combinations) were not influenced by immigration (Van der Brug et al., 2005: 557). Chapin (1992) even found a negative impact of immigration. On the basis of a state-level analysis of elections to the national, state and European Parliaments around 1990 in Germany (\( N = 122 \)), he concluded that the vote for the Republikaner depended on, surprisingly, low immigration levels (Chapin, 1992: 66–8).

As some of these scholars acknowledge, this research runs the risk of committing an ‘ecological fallacy’ (Robinson, 1950), as it aims to draw inferences on individual-level behavior on the basis of data generated at more aggregate-levels. In order to draw valid inferences, one should control for the relevant individual-level factors. But even after controlling for individual-level aspects, it might be still important to not take contextual-level predictors at face value but to double-check them by way of (theoretically-driven) cross-level interaction effects. Such interactions may, for example, involve the interplay of contextual immigration levels and individual attitudes toward immigration. This way, additional evidence may be provided supporting the claim that it is the contextual-level immigration rates, and not contextual-level unobservables, that influence individual-level behavior. This, however, has not yet been done in a satisfactory way.

Notable exceptions to this rule are studies by Lubbers et al., who performed within-country analyses over-time as well as analyses across countries and time. The within-country analysis in Germany is based on opinion poll data from 1989 to 1998 (\( N = 114,798 \)). Lubbers and Scheepers found that German voters are more likely to state a vote intention for the Republikaner when the number of asylum requests is higher and in states where the proportion of ethnic minorities is larger (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2001). They did not, however, find the effect of the state-level proportion of ethnic minorities in a repeated cross-sectional analysis based on data on German voters in 1990, 1992 and 1996. Instead, they found – in another study based on data on Germany – an effect of changes in these proportions (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000: 76, 83). Similar findings were reported in France (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2002: 133, 138–41) and in Flanders (Lubbers et al., 2000: 384). Finally, Lubbers et al. compiled an impressive data set containing information on about 50,000 voters in 16 Western European countries between 1994 and 1997. They concluded that the proportion of non-EU citizens in those countries helped explain the variation in anti-immigration party success between countries (Lubbers et al., 2002: 364, 368). Interestingly, Lubbers et al. also examined the cross-level interaction of aggregate-level proportions of immigrants (non-EU citizens) and individual attitudes toward the immigration issue. If immigration rates had an impact on the anti-immigration vote, then one would expect this effect to be larger among those who have less favorable attitudes toward immigrants than among others. However, the interaction variable yields an effect that is not in the predicted direction (see Table 4 in Lubbers et al., 2002: 369).

2. Possible conditionalities of the effect of immigration on anti-immigration voting

These contradictory findings may be due to several factors, including the chosen level of aggregation. Except for the study by Coffé et al., these analyses have been performed at high levels of aggregation such as the country or state-level. Another reason for the different findings is the different choices in operationalization of the main independent variable. Some studies focus on immigration levels, others on immigration level change, and again others on the proportions of immigrants within specific units, or changes in these proportions.

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5 The results concerning the effects of objective immigration rates on anti-immigration voting are mixed. This said, when it comes to attitudes towards immigration, there is quite some convincing evidence. In the existing literature, it has been shown that the vote for anti-immigration parties is strongly associated with voters’ attitudes towards immigration (e.g., Van der Brug et al., 2000; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2003; Ivarsflaten, 2008, 2005b). These explanations tell only part of the story, because it remains unknown how voters obtain these attitudes. Most notably, the extent to which these attitudes and perceptions are based on objective facts is unclear. An important complicating factor is that these attitudes and perceptions are, at least partly, endogenous. Anti-immigration party propaganda may actually influence voters’ perceptions, positions and attitudes (Van der Brug 2003; Thijssen and Dierickx, 2001; Bélanger and Aarts, 2006).

6 Interestingly, we also arrive at this remarkable result (not shown in this paper, since it is not of core interest here).
We propose yet another reason why these differences may occur: the conditionality of the effect on another factor. It has been suggested previously that the effect of unemployment on anti-immigration party voting may be conditional upon immigration rates (Golder, 2003). This is plausible, as several anti-immigration parties – and none of their competitors – link employment to immigration, as Golder (2003) rightly points out. Put differently, restrictive immigration policies are often proposed by rival right-wing parties, and measures to fight unemployment by leftist competitors. However, the only parties in contemporary Western Europe that explicitly link foreigners to unemployment have (thus far) been anti-immigration parties.

Similarly, what sets several anti-immigration parties apart from their rivals is often not their restrictive immigration policies or their tough crime policies. The differences with the mainstream right on these issues are often difficult to discern. Anti-immigration parties’ unique selling point rather lies in the fact that they explicitly link the two: These parties tend to associate immigrants with crime. In line with this, we expect that the anti-immigration vote is not (only) fueled by anti-immigration or crime fighting rhetoric in isolation. Instead, the link between immigrants and crime is what helps these parties. Accordingly, we propose that the impact of immigration rates is not equal for all voters. Rather, immigration is primarily important for those who (1) perceive a link between foreigners and crime and who (2) have very tough stances on these issues. The conditionality of these effects may explain the often contradictory findings in the literature. In addition, it may further our understanding as to why in some countries with high immigration levels no anti-immigration party seems to thrive, while these parties flourish in countries with much lower immigration levels.

3. The criminalization of immigrants and the anti-immigration vote

Thus far we saw that the two main bodies of research on anti-immigration support tend to perceive a link between high immigration levels and increased anti-immigration party support either on cultural or on economic grounds. They may have been advanced by several scholars – these two types of theories share the same deficit, namely they ignore the key role of crime in the formation of feelings against immigrants. Apart from a direct materialist or cultural threat, immigrants are also, and perhaps even predominantly so, seen as a threat because of their alleged massive involvement in crime. The conditionality of the effect of immigration on anti-immigration voting may thus concern various socio-economic problems, among which crime. That anti-immigration parties benefit electorally from associating foreigners with crime is theoretically expected, and indications for this effect are observed in practice.

In theory, anti-immigration parties tend to attract voters with an “authoritarian personality” (see Adorno et al., 1950). Indeed, “authoritarianism is one of the factors most frequently considered worthwhile to explain extreme right-wing voting” (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000: 68). Empirical evidence for anti-immigration parties’ additional electoral attractiveness among authoritarian voters has been found in several studies (e.g., Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000; Mayer and Perrineau, 1992). Fighting crime as well as strictly maintaining law and order is highly valued by voters with authoritarian predispositions. By blaming immigrants for crime, anti-immigration parties can win voters who hold such authoritarian attitudes for their anti-immigration cause. Thus, they can expect linking foreigners to crime to be a successful electoral strategy.

In practice, crime is ubiquitous in the literature on the ideology of these parties. Mudde, for instance, notes that “the key issue of the authoritarian program of the populist right is the fight against crime” (Mudde, 2007: 146). All anti-immigration parties “want more policemen, with better equipment and salaries, less red tape, and greater competence”, making crime clearly one of these parties’ core issues (Mudde, 2007: 146, 300). In addition, anti-immigration parties are generally in favor of a strengthening of the independence of the police and judiciary, stricter laws and their enforcement, increased sentences and tougher prison regimes, and the right for ordinary citizens to bear arms (Mudde, 2007: 146–7). These parties may therefore expect to be more successful in electoral terms in crime-ridden regions than in ones that are less problematic in this respect. There are indications that the anti-immigration Flemish Interest (VB) selects the municipalities where the party stands for elections on the basis of local crime rates. In 1999, the VB was “more likely to present a list in the elections in those municipalities that are confronted with higher levels of crime” (Coffé et al., 2007: 151). Mudde reports that in the relevant literature, crime is usually seen as the second or third reason to vote for anti-immigration parties after immigration policy and dissatisfaction with the political system (Mudde, 2007: 224).

Anti-immigration parties do not only focus on crime as such. In addition, they make abundantly clear that foreigners are to blame for it. For example, Republican party leader Schönhuber described immigrants as “carriers of crime” (Ignazi, 2003: 72). The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) is another example of a party that consistently accuses foreigners of being the prime source of crime.

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7 It is possible that it is not crime but rather local disorders such as graffiti, vandalism of private and public property, and trash on the streets that makes citizens more likely to cast and anti-immigration vote (e.g., Skogan, 1986, 1988, 1990). Unfortunately, we do not have data on perceived disorder. However, local disorder perceptions and crime are quite highly correlated at the neighborhood-level (Skogan, 1986: 213). Thus, by measuring neighborhood-level crime levels we might tap disorder as well. Future research should investigate to what extent the effects we find are due to criminal behavior and to what degree they are driven by disorderly and disreputable behavior.

8 Whether crime actually is more widespread among non-natives than among natives in contemporary Western Europe or not falls beyond the scope of this article. It suffices that Western European citizens perceive a link between the two, and that their wishes on these issues are similar to the policies anti-immigration parties advocate.
the question of whether immigrants make the country 

Orthodox Rally (LAOS) in Greece reads: “We firmly believe 
that the recent increase in crime rates is ‘imported’ by 
illegal immigrants.” Anti-immigration parties seem to 
reap the fruits of this particular strategy. In Italy, for 
instance, voter surveys have indicated that relatively many 
Northern League (LN) voters feel that immigrants cause 
crime (Ignazi, 2003: 59).

In line with our argument, Chapin (1992) finds that it is not 
the number of foreigners that matters but the proportion of 
foreigners arrested as suspects for crimes that increased anti-
immigration voting in Germany. Chapin (1992: 67) concludes 
that the recent increase in crime rates is 

immigration voting in Germany. Chapin (1992: 67) concludes 
that this “suggests that German voters react not simply to the 
background of foreigners, as one would expect when xeno-
phobia alone were at work, but that German voters are more 
sophisticated in their decision making regarding foreigners. 
The evidence here implies that if foreigner levels were 
increasing steadily throughout Germany, but foreigner crime 
levels were not, the prospects that new right parties would 
achieve significant electoral support would decline. However, 
when foreigners are linked to socio-economic problems, such 
as rising crime rates, the prospects for significant new right 
electoral support remain strong”.

This not only dovetails with our argument on the 
association of foreigners with crime but also with findings 
by Golder (2003) on the conditionality of the effect of 
immigration on the anti-immigration vote on another 
socio-economic problem, unemployment.

Other results in the literature on crime as a factor in 
anti-immigration party choice are mixed (Coffé et al., 2007; 
Sniderman et al., 2004; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000), and 
the interplay with immigration has never even been tested. 
The already mentioned study by Coffé et al. (2007) investi-
gated, among other things, the impact of municipal-level 
crime rates as such on the anti-immigration vote in Fland-
ers and did not find any effect. Lubbers and Scheepers (2000), by contrast, studied attitudinal dispositions. They found that perceived importance of ‘law and order’ compared to ‘other aspects of life’ enhanced voting for the 
German anti-immigration party Republikaner (Lubbers and 
(2004) studied perceived threats and their effects on atti-

ditudes toward various groups of foreigners. They found that perceived sociotropic threats of violence and vandalism 
were positively associated with exclusionary reactions 
toward refugees and asylum seekers. However, this effect 
was only weak compared to the effects of economic and 
cultural threats, and they did not find this impact with 
regard to the other groups under study (Surinamese, 
Moroccans and Turks), or concerning egocentric (as 
opposed to sociotropic) threats.

In view of the above, we expect that it is not just any citizen 
that is more likely to vote for an anti-immigration party if 
immigration increases, but only those who associate immi-
grants with crime. In contemporary Western Europe, immi-
grants are commonly associated with crime. To illustrate this 
point, roughly two thirds of respondents answered ‘worse’ to 
the question of whether immigrants make the country’s crime 
problems worse or better (see also Rydgren, 2008). In the case 
under investigation in this study, the Netherlands in 2002, the 
share of respondents who replied ‘worse’ was even as high as 
80%. We can therefore safely assume that the link between 
immigrants and crime is commonly made in our case. Yet, once 
this association is widely established, we still do not expect all 
voters to respond to high levels of immigration by casting an 
anti-immigration vote. Only those who feel that the govern-
ment should be tougher on crime are hypothesized to be more 
likely to vote for an anti-immigration party when the immi-
gration rate increases.

Hypothesis 1: The larger the local share of immigrants, the 
more likely a voter is to vote for an anti-immigration party if and only if (s)he has a ‘tough’ position on crime policy.

If it is through the criminalization of immigrants that 
anti-immigration parties win votes, the link between crime 
and immigration should also work the other way about. 
Citizens who think that immigration should be restricted 
are then deemed to be the ones who are sensitive to crime 
in their local environment when it comes to their choice of 
whether or not to vote for an anti-immigration party. Thus, 
we expect that it is only voters who desire full assimilation 
of immigrants who are conducive to an anti-immigration 
vote in case the local crime rates go up.

Hypothesis 2: The higher the local crime rates, the more 
likely a voter is to vote for an anti-immigration party if and 
only if (s)he has a ‘tough’ position on ethnic integration 
policy.

We expect to see evidence of the same mechanism at 
work concerning crime and integration policy preferences. 
To check this, we examine individual voting behavior apart 
from contextual-level effects. Preference for the crime and 
integration policies that anti-immigration parties advocate 
surely makes anti-immigration voting more likely. More 
importantly, we hypothesize an additional interaction 
effect of crime and integration policy preferences. If anti-
immigration parties successfully exploit their criminaliza-
ton of foreigners, fear of crime should amplify the effect of 
their position on anti-immigration voting, and vice versa. 
Thus, we have reason to expect that only voters who 
are both ‘tough’ on crime and ‘tough’ on immigration 
should be more likely to vote for an anti-immigration party.

Hypothesis 3: The tougher a voter’s position on ethnic 
integration, the more likely the voter is to vote for an anti-
immigration party if and only if (s)he has a ‘tough’ position on 
crime policy.

Hypothesis 4: The tougher a voter’s position on crime, 
the more likely the voter is to vote for an anti-immigration 
party if and only if (s)he has a ‘tough’ position on ethnic 
integration policy.

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10 Question included in the first round of the European Social Survey (ESS), conducted throughout Western Europe in 2002. The results per-
taining to the Netherlands are based on a representative sample of the 
Dutch electorate (N = 2,364). The appropriate weights apply. Respon-
dents could indicate their answer to this question on a 0–10 scale ranging 
from ‘worse’ (0) to ‘better’ (10). The numbers stated apply to the joint 
share of respondents indicating between 0 and 4. Neutral (5) was chosen 
by 12%, while 6% indicated ‘better’ (6–10). About 1% of respondents used 
the ‘don’t know’ option.
In this paper, we test these hypotheses on the basis of empirical data. We do so while holding constant all the relevant parameters mentioned in the following section.

4. Controls

In this section, we explicitly frame the empirical implications with which the control variables of our analysis are associated. We do so by referring explicitly to the case under study in this paper, the vote for the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in the 2002 elections to the Dutch national Parliament. In accordance with what Golder (2003) refers to as the “instrumental hypothesis”, it has repeatedly been demonstrated that unemployed and less well-educated citizens are more likely to cast an anti-immigration vote than employed and well-educated voters (e.g., Lubbers et al., 2002: 370). We thus control for individual-level policy preferences toward immigration and all the relevant aggregate-level control variables as the independent variables:

$$LPF_j = a + bX_j + u_j$$

where $X$ is a matrix of contextual-level variables and $j$ denotes the municipality units. After this, we shift our attention to the individual-level and estimate a logit model in order to test the aforementioned hypotheses. The generic form of the micro-level model fitted against the data is the following:

$$P(LPF_{ij} = 1 | Z_{ij}, X_j) = G(a + bZ_{ij} + cX_j)$$

where

$$0 < G(a + bZ_{ij} + cX_j) < 1,$$

and

$$G(a + bZ_{ij} + cX_j) = \frac{e^{a + bZ_{ij} + cX_j}}{1 + e^{a + bZ_{ij} + cX_j}}$$

where $Z$ is a matrix of individual-level covariates, $X$ is the matrix of contextual-level covariates, and $G(\cdot)$ is the logit function.11 Here, the dependent variable is the reported LPF vote at the individual-level. We now discuss the sources of our individual- and contextual-level information and, more importantly, describe in more detail the set of indicators included in $X$ and $Z$.

The data that we use are derived from the 2002 Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (DPES). We link this study to data on characteristics of the Dutch neighborhoods that we collected specially for this study.

The DPES are known for their well-structured questionnaires and methodological robustness. The 2002 DPES, conducted by the University of Leiden, contains all the relevant variables the existing literature suggests to take into account (Irwin et al., 2005). Moreover, our relatively ideologically-driven but also contained some component of discontent (Bélanger and Aarts, 2006). These controls include measures of political cynicism, interpersonal trust, internal efficacy, perceived corruption in the Netherlands, satisfaction with the way democracy works in the Netherlands and approval of democracy as a form of government more generally.

Finally, other individual-level factors we should control for include gender, age and church attendance. This is because female, older and religious voters are less likely to cast an anti-immigration vote (e.g., Lubbers et al., 2002).

5. Data and method

In this paper, we use a unit of aggregation that is smaller than the ones employed in virtually all previous studies. We start off by estimating an OLS regression model on the basis of the aggregate-level data only. To this avail, we regress the vote share that the LPF received in each municipality on immigration and all the relevant aggregate-level control variables as the independent variables:
rich data set allows us to include additional control variables such as individual-level ideological preferences, policy issue positions, interpersonal trust, and several other variables. For the 2002 DPES, a representative sample of 1,907 subjects was drawn from the approximately 12,000,000 Dutch citizens eligible to vote. Because several subgroups are under-represented in the sample – most importantly, the LPF voters (Irwin et al., 2005: 10–1) – we apply the appropriate weight for this study (called $SDEMm02$), which is based on sociodemographic variables plus election results (multiplicative method).

In addition, we have at our disposal a list indicating for each of the respondents the neighborhood where (s)he lives in the format of a four-digit zip code ($N = 685$). Socio-economic data concerning each of the Dutch neighborhoods that the respondents lived in at the time of the DPES interviews are derived from stalline.cbs.nl, the online web site of Statistics Netherlands (CBS), the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs’ statistics agency. These include the LPF vote share at the 2002 national elections, non-natives as a proportion of the total population, the crime rate, the unemployment rate, the average per capita income, a measure of the inequality of the distribution of the per capita income, the population density, and a proxy for social capital.

Linking these municipal-level data to the individual-level DPES data enables us to draw valid inferences on the influence of the voter’s direct environment on the vote for one of the most successful anti-immigration parties the world has ever witnessed, the LPF.

The main independent variable is the share of non-western non-natives by neighborhood. We analyze this variable in interaction with crime policy positions ($H_1$). In order to test the hypothesis related with crime rates, we interact official crime statistics (at the aggregate-level) with voters’ policy positions concerning ethnic integration ($H_2$). The last set of hypotheses refers to the mutual interaction of voters’ policy positions regarding crime protection, on the one hand, and ethnic integration, on the other ($H_3$, $H_4$).

A voter’s attitude toward ethnic integration policy is measured by her or his self-placement on a scale ranging from the statement that ethnic minorities should be allowed to “preserve the customs of their own culture” ($1$) to the demand to “completely adjust to Dutch culture” ($7$) (see also, e.g., Van der Brug, 2003). As a proxy for crime policy positions, a scale is used that varies from the opinion that “the government acts too tough on crime” ($1$) to the assertion that “the government should act tougher on crime” ($7$). We would like to emphasize that the question used does not mention immigrants but merely focuses on crime.

We do not only add contextual controls but also individual-level. Table 1 presents a list of the variables used in the analysis, together with their descriptive statistics. In accordance with the relevant literature (e.g., Van der Brug et al., 2000; Lubbers et al., 2002, 2000; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000, 2002; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2003), we include three kinds of individual-level control variables. First of all, we include sociodemographic characteristics. These are gender, age, frequency of church attendance.

12 In order to account for the exceptional circumstances in which the 2002 Dutch national elections took place, created by the murder of LPF leader Pim Fortuyn, we perform our analyses in two additional ways. First, we re-estimate our models on the basis of pre-election wave data, collected when Fortuyn was still alive, using the stated intention to vote LPF instead of reported LPF vote. Secondly, we include an additional control variable about the voter’s opinion on who is to blame for the assassination of Fortuyn. These analyses do not result in substantially different results. This boosts the confidence we have in our findings.

13 We use municipal-level LPF vote shares in the 2002 elections to the Dutch National Parliament.

14 Data on non-natives are collected at the neighborhood-level. These neighborhood-level figures are available for 2001, thus close to the election under examination. We also performed analyses based on more aggregate-level (municipal-level) data, with different groups of non-natives: Turks, Moroccans, Turks and Moroccans taken together, all non-Western taken together, and all non-natives taken together. Results were very similar, with a consistent effect on LPF voting at the municipal-level. Source is Statistics Netherlands (CBS).

15 Crime rates in 2002 are recorded by municipality in the 30 largest municipalities (i.e., in terms of population), as well as by police region across the country (the Netherlands is divided into 25 police regions). Thus, for the smaller municipalities, we had to resort to police region figures. This entails a reduction of variation in crime rates. However, the division of the country into police regions (in the 1990s) took place by clustering municipalities on the basis of their crime rates. For example, Amsterdam formed one police region together with five neighboring municipalities with similar (high) crime rates. For this reason, the variation in crime levels within police regions can be assumed to be small. We analyzed municipalities with similar (high) crime rates. For this reason, the variance in crime rates is likely to blur the effect of aggregate-level crime rates.

16 Unemployment rates as a percentage of the total labor force in 2002 are available for 2001, thus close to the election under examination. We also performed analyses based on more aggregate-level (municipal-level) data, with different groups of non-natives: Turks, Moroccans, Turks and Moroccans taken together, all non-Western taken together, and all non-natives taken together. Results were very similar, with a consistent effect on LPF voting at the municipal-level. Source is Statistics Netherlands (CBS).

17 Income refers to neighborhood-level average annual income per inhabitant in euros (divided by 1,000) in 2001. Source: Statistics Netherlands (CBS).

18 Economic inequality is also measured at the neighborhood-level and also pertains to 2001. It is a measure of the size of the middle income category, based on the proportional size of the standard lower income group (measured in percentage of total neighborhood population) and the proportional size of the standard higher income group, both reported by Statistics Netherlands (CBS).

Population density is measured per squared kilometer and also pertains to the neighborhood where a respondent lives. Source is Statistics Netherlands (CBS). For all variables for which we dispose neighborhood-level information, we assumed that the respondent with a zip code corresponding to more than one neighborhood comes from the modal neighborhood (in terms of number of inhabitants) and we thus used the data from that neighborhood for that respondent.

20 As a measure of social capital we chose one that closely resembles the proxy taken by Cofé et al. (2007). Their social capital variable is the local branches of socio-cultural associations per head. These are primarily local branches of (inter)national associations for women, retirees, civil rights, and so on” (2007: 146). We take the number of branches of non-profit organizations by municipality (source: Statistics Netherlands, abbreviated CBS) divided by the municipality’s number of inhabitants and multiplied by 1,000.

21 This item originally ranges from 1 (every Sunday) to 5 (never). However, given that 54.73 per cent of the respondents are located the highest point of the scale (5), we recode the item by distinguishing only between those who never go to church (1) with all other groups (0).
social class, a dichotomous variable identifying those who are unemployed, as well as a categorical scale denoting income.

Second, in line with the literature on the LPF vote as a vote associated with disillusionment or diffuse ‘protest’ (e.g., Bélanger and Aarts, 2006), we add a set of indicators about respondents’ attitudes toward the political system, which comprises political cynicism, a dummy denoting whether the respondent thinks that people can be generally trusted (0) or not (1); internal political efficacy, voters’ perception of the occurrence of corruption in Dutch politics; the level of satisfaction with the way democracy works in the country, and the extent to which the respondents believe that democracy is the best form of government more generally.

Finally, two variables tapping the voters’ ideological positions are included. We use two scales for this. First, the left-right scale that is generally perceived to be dominant in contemporary Western European party competition (e.g., Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996b; Oppenhuis, 1995) and has been shown to structure party competition in the Netherlands (e.g., Tillie, 1995). Second, a dimension of progressive versus conservative policy preferences, which is often used in addition to a left-right axis in order to capture the political context of Western Europe (e.g., Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; Kriesi et al., 2006). The 2002 DPES contains voters’ self-placement and party placement on each of these two dimensions. The variables we add to the models are the

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24 Self-reported, varying from 1 (upper class) to 5 (working class).
25 A 5-point scale from lower to higher level of education.
26 Ranging from 1 (the lowest category) to 6 (highest). We also estimated the models by fully factorizing all categorical variables (issue position scales have been treated as continuous). The results were substantively identical (results available upon request).
27 A 0-3 scale from low – reference category – to high.
28 A 0-5 scale decomposed into dummies with 1 (lowest) serving as the reference category.
29 Ranging from 1 (=very often) to 4 (=not at all).
30 A four-point scale where in group 1 we find those who are “very satisfied” with the way democracy works in the Netherlands, and 4 comprises those respondents who are “very dissatisfied” with how democracy works in this country.
31 A five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5).
squared proximity between a voter and her or his placement of the LPF on a progressive-conservative scale, and in terms of left and right (see also, e.g., Van der Brug et al., 2000; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2003).

Before we turn to the results, it is important to note that we have also examined whether the incorporation of contextual-level characteristics into our individual-level data set has resulted in sampling error. In the appendix we describe two such sources of sampling error that might bias our estimates. The way this potential source of bias in the estimates is addressed is also explicated in the appendix.

6. Results

Do immigration rates affect anti-immigration parties’ electoral performance? We first address this question from quite a common angle, examining aggregate-level correlations only. See Model 1 in Table 2 for the results of this exercise.  

As shown in Table 2, Model 1 explains 34.6% of the variation in LPF vote share between the 83 municipalities. Immigration has a positive effect on the LPF vote share.\(^{33}\) Like that of unemployment and income, the effect that immigration yields is significant at the \(p < 0.05\) level. If the proportion of immigrants is 10 percentage points larger in municipality A than in municipality B, Model 1 predicts that the LPF vote share in A is 3.8 percentage points larger than in B. We use estimates based on simulations (run with CLARIFY (King et al., 2000; Tomz et al., 2001)) as an indication of the strength of the immigration effect along the observed range of values. For this, we estimate the LPF vote share when immigration is one standard deviation (\(= 6.38\)) below its mean of 7.99, at 7.99–6.38 = 1.61%, and when immigration is one standard deviation above, at 7.99 + 6.38 = 14.37%.\(^{34}\) Keeping all other parameters at their mean values, the LPF obtains 14.1% of the vote in the former case, and 18.2% in the latter. Both estimates fall far outside of each other’s 95% confidence intervals. Thus, not controlling for individual-level characteristics, the impact of local immigration rates on electoral support for the LPF is quite substantial.

We now shift our focus to the individual-level variation in the probability of voting for LPF. We first regress the vote for the LPF on the same aggregate-level variables without adding more controls (see Model 2). Thus, we merely change our second-level unit of analysis. Now, we use more detailed information (at least for those variables available): neighborhood-level characteristics. Moreover, to control for the possible correlation between respondents living in the same neighborhoods, we use intra-correlation-robust standard errors, accounting for the clustering of the observations at the neighborhood-level.\(^{35}\)

The effects of these contextual characteristics change somewhat from Model 1 to Model 2. More importantly for our present purposes, both the objective crime and immigration rates exert a positive impact on the probability of voting for the LPF in both models (see Model 2 in Table 2).

In Model 3 (still Table 2) we have added the individual-level control variables. The model fit improves dramatically (from 3% to over 36% of variance explained). The effects of aggregate-level immigration and crime rates remain statistically significant (\(p = 0.05\), one-tailed) and in the predicted direction. Similarly, individual-level policy preferences concerning the integration of immigrants and concerning crime yield statistically significant (\(p = 0.05\), one-tailed) effects in the predicted direction.

We now proceed by testing our ‘criminalization’ hypotheses. Our first hypothesis asserts that immigration rates are more consequential when it comes to opting for LPF for those who are ‘tough’ on crime. Following common wisdom we should examine whether this is the case by focusing on the interaction term of the two corresponding variables. However, even with an OLS model, such a product term would not be sufficient to fully capture how attitudes toward crime mediate the role of aggregate-level immigration. To grasp this pattern in a comprehensive way.

32 Before fitting the linear model to the data, we have fitted a local linear regression curve (loess) in the scatter plot of immigration rates with aggregate LPF vote share. As all non-parametric estimation methods, the idea behind loess is that we can trace the relationship between two variables without making functional form assumptions. The pattern (not shown to save space) indicated a monotonic relationship that can be adequately summarized with a linear specification. This is also true for crime rates.

33 A potential problem with this analysis is that although our dependent variable is measured in percentages and thus provides interval-level information, there are still ceiling effects which might cause bias analogous to that found in the linear probability model. To see whether this is the case here, the original dependent variable is subjected to a logistic transformation according to the following formula: \(Y = \log((\% \text{LPF}/\max(\% \text{LPF}))/((1-(\% \text{LPF}/\max(\% \text{LPF})))) \)). When this variable is used, the effects remain very similar, although we now explain almost half of the variance. For this reason, we stick to the original variable. Reassuringly, predicted values of LPF support never reach 29.6, which is the maximum observed for the LPF vote share across all municipalities (for a similar treatment of continuous variables with potential ceiling effects see Franklin, 2004: 76).

34 Recall that this analysis includes all aggregate data we have available, since we do not still use individual-level information, which is only available for some of the municipalities. This is why the standard deviation of immigration rates is not as big as shown in Table 1, 6.38 as compared to 11.42. The latter represents the figure for immigration among the municipalities included in the individual-level analysis.

35 We believe that the clustering of the errors is sufficient for accounting for the possible intra-correlation patterns due to the particular data generation process. As Arceneaux and Nickerson (2009) demonstrate analytically clustering provides standard errors that are equally adequate to account for intra-class correlation as random effects models or multilevel models. This is even more the case when the number of clusters and the ratio of variance within clusters to the variance across clusters are high. Here, we have a very large cluster size (685) and only moderate intra-class correlation (0.048). We have started with a three-level model, whereby individuals were nested within neighborhoods which are, in turn, nested within municipalities. This model was compared with a simpler two-level model, where only the first and second-levels were modeled. A Hausman test indicated that adding a third level does not improve the fit of the model. As a second stage, a two-level model was compared with a logit model in which intra-class correlation is taken into account by robust standard errors, clustered at the neighborhood level. Again, the two models do not appear to differ significantly in terms of their fit to the data. This is shown both by the Log-Likelihood ratio test and the information criteria tests (both AIC and BIC). Moreover, in most cases, all coefficients denoting fixed-effects were almost identical to those generated by the logit model. The standard errors of the latter were on average slightly higher than those of the former. Thus, for the sake of simplicity, we only report here the results stemming from the estimation of a simple logit model with robust standard errors clustered at the neighborhood level.
one would need to examine the variation in the marginal
effect of immigration across all levels of the scale denoting
attitudes towards crime protection (Brambor, Clark and
Golder, 2003). In a binary-choice (using either a logit or
probit link function) model this second step is essential,
simply because neither the sign nor the level of signifi-
cance of the product term reveal anything meaningful about
whether and, if so, how one covariate conditions the effect
of another covariate. As Berry, DeMeritt and Esarey show
analytically, a product term in such binary-choice models is

Table 2
Explaining LPF voting, aggregate \((Y = \text{vote share LPF, Model 1})\) and individual-level \((Y = P(\text{LPF vote}), \text{Model 2–3})\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigration rate (aggregate)</td>
<td>0.380 (0.092)</td>
<td>0.024 (0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime rate (aggregate)</td>
<td>0.297 (0.190)</td>
<td>0.006 (0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment rate (aggregate)</td>
<td>2.27 (0.959)</td>
<td>−0.069 (0.208)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (aggregate)</td>
<td>0.174 (0.053)</td>
<td>−1.04 (0.088)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic equality (aggregate)</td>
<td>0.064 (0.056)</td>
<td>−0.023 (0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density (aggregate)</td>
<td>0.001 (0.002)</td>
<td>−0.000008 (0.00003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social capital (aggregate)</td>
<td>−0.371 (0.526)</td>
<td>−0.188 (0.141)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration policy preference</td>
<td>0.325 (0.114)</td>
<td>0.391 (0.164)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime policy preference</td>
<td>0.779 (0.252)</td>
<td>0.064 (0.135)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.117 (0.578)</td>
<td>−0.052 (0.091)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age cohort</td>
<td>−0.032 (0.189)</td>
<td>−0.818 (0.193)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church attendance</td>
<td>−0.117 (0.578)</td>
<td>0.046 (0.234)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social class</td>
<td>−0.117 (0.578)</td>
<td>0.046 (0.234)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>−0.052 (0.091)</td>
<td>0.355 (0.162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td>−0.143 (0.113)</td>
<td>−0.818 (0.193)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption perception</td>
<td>−0.117 (0.578)</td>
<td>0.046 (0.234)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>−0.052 (0.091)</td>
<td>0.355 (0.162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with democracy</td>
<td>−0.818 (0.193)</td>
<td>0.355 (0.162)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of democracy</td>
<td>0.355 (0.162)</td>
<td>0.040 (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left-right position</td>
<td>0.355 (0.162)</td>
<td>0.040 (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive-conservative position</td>
<td>0.355 (0.162)</td>
<td>0.040 (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared (Mc-Fadden R-squared)</td>
<td>0.346</td>
<td>0.030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entries are log odds in all cells, except in the first column where they are the marginal effects estimated through OLS regression analysis. Robust standard errors, clustered at the neighborhood-level in the second and third column, in parentheses.

Fig. 1. The marginal effect of immigration rates on the probability of voting for the LPF across all points of the issue scale measuring attitudes towards crime protection. Note: Solid line presents change in probability of voting for LPF, 95% confidence intervals shown by the dotted line.

Fig. 2. The marginal effect of crime rates on the probability of voting for the LPF across all points of the issue scale measuring attitudes towards immigrant integration. Note: Solid line presents change in probability of voting for LPF, 95% confidence intervals shown by the dotted line.
stricter policy positions in the issue of crime across all points of the immigrant integration scale. The difference in probability of voting LPF as a result of more integrationist attitudes on the immigration issue across all points in the issue scale measuring attitudes towards crime protection. The second panel displays the mirror image of the first: the difference in the probability of voting LPF as a result of having stricter policy positions in the issue of crime across all points of the immigrant integration scale.

Fig. 3. The interaction between attitudes towards immigrant integration and crime protection on the probability of voting for the LPF. Note: The first panel shows the difference in probability of voting LPF as a result of more integrationist attitudes on the immigration issue across all points in the issue scale measuring attitudes towards crime protection. The second panel displays the mirror image of the first: the difference in the probability of voting LPF as a result of having stricter policy positions in the issue of crime across all points of the immigrant integration scale.

simply redundant (Berry et al., 2010). The reason for this is that the effect of a given variable on substantive quantities of interest (in our case the predicted probability of voting for LPF) varies (either significantly or not) according to the values of the other covariates. This means that the only way to see whether the effect of local immigration on the LPF vote is conditioned upon individuals’ attitudes toward crime is to simulate different scenarios in the probability of voting LPF as a result of an increase in the levels of immigration for each point of the crime protection scale. This is done by using CLARIFY (King et al., 2000), based on the estimates of Model 3. The results from this exercise are shown in Fig. 1.36

Fig. 1 shows the difference in the probability of voting LPF among two individuals who are similar on the observables but one lives in a neighborhood with 3 per cent foreign population (25th percentile) and the other lives in a neighborhood with a 9.06 per cent foreign population (mean value). This difference is simulated for each point of the crime protection scale. For those who believe that the government is already acting too tough on this issue, the difference in the ethnic composition of the two areas makes hardly any difference. However, as we move toward more hawk-oriented attitudes, this difference increases in geometric fashion: for those located at point 7 of the scale the same difference in immigration rates makes it approximately 1 per cent more likely to vote LPF. This is by no means a remarkable effect. The reason for this is that, controlling for the whole set of observables included in Table 2, immigration rates do not exert a very strong unconditional effect on the LPF vote. However, what is important for our purposes is that this effect increases remarkably (becomes approximately 8 times higher from one extreme to the other) according to one’s attitudes toward crime protection.

Fig. 2 presents the equivalent analysis focusing now on the conditional effect of attitudes towards ethnic minorities on the impact of crime rates on the LPF vote. Allowing crime rates to range to the same extent (from the 25th percentile to the mean value), we observe an analogous pattern that largely confirms H2. Higher crime rates are substantially more conducive to LPF voting for those strongly advocating the view that immigrants should adjust to the Dutch culture. The more one demands the full integration of immigrants in Dutch society, the more important crime becomes in one’s decision to opt for an LPF vote (H2).

Secondly, we examine the interaction of policy positions on crime with those on ethnic integration (H3, H4). Not surprisingly, both crime and ethnic integration positions have a strong effect on the likelihood to vote for the LPF. In addition, we find that the tougher on crime and on ethnic integration, the more likely a voter is to vote for the LPF. These results appear in Fig. 3, which reveals a rather straightforward pattern: a mix of crime and xenophobia is important to anti-immigration voting. As shown in the figure, ethnic integration policy positions matter a lot more for voters who are tough on crime (H3), and vice versa (H4). Both effects indicate that the interaction of strong positions on both issues leads to an increased probability of voting for the LPF.

7. Sensitivity analyses

In this section, we assess the robustness of our findings. We start with estimation issues. A potential problem is the
skewness of the distribution of the dependent variable, which might cause bias in the estimates of the logit coefficients. The event that is examined here, a vote cast for the LPF, takes place with a probability of approximately 0.10 in our data set. Probabilities of less than 0.10 might call for a different estimation method known as “rare events logit” (King and Zeng, 2001). As it turns out, our findings are robust to the use of this estimation method, which corrects for the bias stemming from events with a particularly small probability of taking place (results available upon request).

Furthermore, we test whether our findings are driven by a possible faulty specification of the flow of causality. If, for different reasons than those suggested in this paper, in areas with many immigrants both voters’ likelihood of voting for the LPF were relatively high, and, because of projection bias,37 these voters expressed relatively radical positions on crime as well as immigration, the observed findings would be spurious. We test the possibility of such endogeneity by replacing voters’ individual perceptions by the (squared) distance between a voter’s position on an issue and the position that (s)he attributes to the LPF. If the effects were driven by projection bias, we would expect this measure of the issue policy variables to raise greater effects since it is more susceptible to the problem of endogeneity. However, when we use this operationalization, the effects turn out to be much smaller and, in many instances, fail to reach commonly used levels of statistical significance. This indicates that there is more to our results than projection bias only.

Last but not least, we check the robustness of the results when different measures of some of the key independent variables are used. First, when immigration policy positions (measured with a question regarding attitudes towards asylum seekers in the same 1 to 7 scale) are used instead of integration policy stances, the findings remain largely unchanged. By the same token, when different types of crime rates are taken into account (‘economic’ crime such as violation of property rights or taking into account only instances of unlawful public violence), this leads to the same substantial results (despite the much lower variance of these indicators at the municipality level) regarding the unconditional and conditional role of crime in the LPF vote.

8. Conclusion

In what ways does immigration matter for the anti-immigration vote? Of course, citizens’ attitudes towards immigrants and perceptions of immigration have repeatedly been demonstrated to be of great importance to the vote for these parties (e.g., Van der Brug et al., 2000; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2003; Ivarsflaten, 2008, 2005b). However, empirical research into the effect of objective immigration rates on the anti-immigration vote has been inconclusive thus far. In this paper, we advance a reason for these mixed findings. Taking a fresh approach, we claim that immigration rates do not exert an effect on the anti-immigration vote in and of itself. The criminalization of foreigners may be crucial here. Where voters link newcomers with crime, those who have a tough stance on crime are more likely to vote for an anti-immigration party as the local share of foreigners goes up (H1). Vice versa, it is only those citizens who are against the idea of the multicultural society (H2) who are influenced by the crime rates in their municipality. Moreover, ethnic integration policy stances are important to only those citizens who are ‘tough on crime’ (H3). Just the other way about, pro-assimilation voters are the only ones for whom the crime policy position matters for the decision to vote for an anti-immigration party (H4). In sum, these findings suggest that voters who associate immigrants with crime are influenced by the levels of crime and immigration in their direct environment. It is through the link between foreigners and crime that the LPF, and possibly other anti-immigration parties, appear to attract voters.

We therefore strongly feel that it is important to include crime rates and positions on crime policy in future analyses that aim to explain anti-immigration voting. The fact that crime has largely been ignored in the existing literature strikes us as a strange and unnecessary limit to the power of the explanations that our discipline has to offer. It is also remarkable, we think, that in an era where large proportions of the electorates in Western Europe feel insecure and threatened by crime, this factor has, in most studies, not been taken into account in any way. Moreover, the anti-immigration parties do try to mobilize on the issue and many of them emphasize the link of foreigners and crime (Muddde, 2007). In addition, the impact of being confronted by, or a victim of, criminal activities on individual behavior can hardly be overstated and is likely to have its effect on citizens’ attitudes, perceptions (Skogan, 1987), and, consequently, on their voting behavior. It should be noted, furthermore, that we assumed that voters make the connection between immigrants and crime, as many seem to do (Rydgren, 2008). However, this should be tested directly in future research.

In terms of methodology, we call for a reassessment of earlier findings, because the methodology of many previous studies on this topic is flawed. In this paper, we empirically demonstrate that, in order to draw valid inferences on contextual factors such as immigration rates, one should control for the relevant individual-level factors. This has only been done in a satisfactory way by Lubbers and his collaborators (Lubbers and Scheepers, 2000, 2001, 2002; Lubbers et al., 2002). Like Lubbers et al., we simultaneously analyze aggregate-level characteristics and all the relevant individual-level aspects that the literature suggests to control for. We go beyond their analyses, however, by including more political attitudes and perceptions, such as crime, immigration and integration policy positions, self- and party placement on a progressive versus conservative scale, and ideological positions in terms of left and right. Moreover, Lubbers et al. did not take crime rates into account, whereas we show that it has effects on the anti-immigration vote. In addition, we examine the interplay of aggregate-level and individual-level effects on the anti-immigration vote in a more extensive way than Lubbers et al. Last but not least, we have a much lower-level of aggregation than any of the Lubbers et al. articles, a level of

37 Projection bias, as meant here, occurs where voters project their preferred party’s policy positions on themselves.
aggregation that has proven to be important for anti-immigration voting in one previous study (Coffé et al., 2007).

In order to avoid contaminations of our results because of cross-country differences or over-time variation, we have assessed the case of one anti-immigration party at one particular election. We have chosen the Netherlands because this country is organized as a single constituency, so that subnational differences in the political context do not exert any notable differences. For reasons of data availability, we have assessed the case of the LPF in 2002. This raises the question of the applicability beyond this case. The LPF surely was an anti-immigration party, and there are no a priori reasons to expect that the Dutch electorate would react very differently to the emergence of this party than it would to other anti-immigration parties, or other electorates would to other anti-immigration parties.

However, the LPF also had some idiosyncratic characteristics that may limit the generalizability of our findings. For example, Fortuyn’s extravagant style and tongue-in-cheek approach could have made the immigration effect on the LPF vote different from the effects on the vote for anti-immigration parties in other countries. Yet, our results make abundantly clear that in the vote for anti-immigration parties, immigration is heavily intertwined with a factor that has largely remained unexplored, crime. This study therefore calls for shifting the scholarly focus on immigration parties, immigration is heavily intertwined with a factor that has largely remained unexplored, crime. Thus, in order to reduce anti-immigration leaders’ electoral support, countering their criminalization of immigrations by may be a more fruitful strategy than trying to stop immigration – if at all possible.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Mark Franklin, Kostas Gemenis, Tom van der Meer, Sergi Pardos, Peter Schmidt, the editor of Electoral Studies and the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments. In addition, we are grateful to Galen Irwin, Josje de Ridder and Joop van Holsteyn for making the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 2002 respondents’ zip codes available to us. All responsibility for errors and omissions lies with the authors.

Appendix. Addressing sampling error within each municipality

Combining our individual-level information with contextual characteristics at the municipality- or neighborhood-level is not a straightforward enterprise. There are two potential sources of bias, both of which relate to sampling error. First, although the DPES survey was designed through a systematic random sample based on region and degree of urbanization (Irwin et al., 2005: 5–6), we have to check whether or not the sampling of the municipalities causes distortions on the effects of the contextual variables used in this analysis. To examine whether this is the case, we add a dummy variable identifying those cases (N = 83) that are in the sample of the DPES 2002 and interact it with each contextual variable to see if the sample differs from the population. None of the interaction variables thus obtained yields a significant effect, which implies that the effects pertaining to all 496 municipalities are not significantly different from the effects pertaining to the 83 municipalities used in our study.38

The second problem relates to the sample distribution of our dependent variable within each second-level unit. Given the variability in the number of respondents within each municipality, the assumption that the LPF vote share is adequately captured within each second-level unit may be violated. Indeed, a binary analysis between our sample estimate and the real LPF vote share within each municipality shows that the first underestimates the LPF’s mean support and overestimates its dispersion.39

A next question is whether this sampling error produces any bias of our estimates. If the intra-municipality sampling error correlates with the explanatory variables in our analysis, such bias occurs. If this is not the case, then sampling bias does not affect the consistency of the OLS estimators, although it increases the variances of the errors (Wooldridge, 2002: 71–2). To see whether there is any systematic pattern between measurement error and our independent variables, we estimate the following model:

\[
\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} P(\text{LPF}_{ij} = 1) = a + \beta V_j + e_j
\]

where \( n \) denotes the number of voters \( i \), within each municipality \( j \), and \( V_j \) the true 2002 vote share of LPF in each municipality. The residuals from this regression (clustered by municipality) constitute the error in the mean level of LPF support in each municipality attributed to within-\( j \) sampling error. In a next step, we regress these residuals on each of our contextual variables. Some of the key contextual-level covariates – most notably neighborhood-level immigration rates – do seem to correlate with this sampling (measurement) error. However, in our individual-level analysis we use immigration rates at the neighborhood level, for which we do not have the LPF vote share. This is important because the use of this weight does not come without any cost. This weight is only applicable if there is at least one LPF voter in each municipality. In our sample, 5 per cent of respondents resided in a municipality where there was no reported vote cast for the LPF in our sample. Essentially, responses from these municipalities are not taken into account with this weighting scheme. The

38 The results are available from the authors upon request.
39 Mean sample LPF vote share is 10.42 with a standard deviation of 8.42 (N = 83). The equivalent figures for the real percentage of LPF by municipality are 16.54 (mean) and 4.10 (standard deviation), respectively (N = 496). The biserial correlation between these two variables is .476 (p < 0.05).
same analysis is replicated both with and without this municipality-level weight. None of the hypotheses is affected. The results reported here come from the analysis that includes this weight in combination with the DPES sample weight [Sdemm02] because we want to avoid any source of measurement error that might not be orthogonal to either of the key covariates in the analysis. The results without the weight are available upon request.

References


