

Contextual factors and the salience of the immigration issue

An analysis of populist radical right parties' favourite topic



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Abstract

This master thesis seeks to explain how structural factors influence the salience of the immigration issue. Stated more precisely, the research question is: *To what extent does immigration influence the salience of the immigration issue, when also taking other main plausible factors into account?*

To answer the research question, literature on populist radical right (PRR) parties is combined with issue salience theory. Previous research from the demand side account of the PRR party literature has often tried to explain how structural factors influence the electoral support for these parties. Their claim is that immigration and the multicultural society has facilitated the success of PRR parties. However, their empirical support for this argument is generally contested, especially by more supply side oriented scholars.

Issue salience theory contributes with relevant intervening factors to the causal chain mentioned above. From this perspective, the electoral success of PRR parties should partly hinge on the salience of the immigration issue. Also, the salience of the immigration issue should, in theory, be more closely related to sociostructural factors. Factors related to party competition, generally associated with supply side theories, are believed to enter the causal chain at a later stage. Thus, the argument in this thesis stretches from structural factors to the salience of the immigration issue. Even though such a focus would provide much insight into how the PRR parties' single-most important issue becomes salient, it has yet not been thoroughly investigated in the literature on PRR parties.

To investigate the research question, this thesis uses two different analyses on a selection of 14 Western European countries from 2003 to 2009. The variation *between* countries is analysed first. The results show that the share of foreigners and the inflow of immigrants probably do increase the salience of the immigration issue. There is seemingly a threshold effect of the share of foreigners; for the immigration issue to become important there must be a sizable share of foreigners in the country. When the variation *within* countries is analysed, it is found that a prosperous economy increases the importance of the immigration issue. The results also show that increased immigration *does* increase the salience of the immigration issue, but only as long as the unemployment is low. This supports the claim that the absence of problems related to the economy facilitates increased salience of the immigration issue.

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1. Introduction

In the last decades, populist radical right (PRR) parties have become increasingly successful and visible in Western European politics. Their most important political issue is immigration and their policies and statements on this issue regularly lead to controversy. However, scholars have generally sought to explain why they succeed, and not how their issue comes on the agenda. This master thesis investigates how the populist radical right parties' favourite topic, immigration, becomes salient

1.1 *The theoretical foundation*

The research question is: *to what extent does immigration influence the salience of the immigration issue, when also taking other main plausible factors into account?* The theoretical framework is made up of a combination of the theoretical literature on PRR parties and issue salience theory. Most of the literature on PRR parties seeks, with some variation, to explain how, why and why not these parties achieve electoral success and why people vote for them. Causal claims about the influence of contextual factors on these dependent variables are in general contested. The causal chain is therefore broken up at a strategic joint in this master thesis, as advocated by Pierson (2003). This approach has been taken before by van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie (2005), but it is argued here that *issue salience* provides a theoretically and methodologically more sound break-off point than *electoral potential*, which they used. The salience of the immigration issue should according to issue salience theory be a prerequisite for the success of PRR parties. It is therefore of great interest to the PRR literature to find out why this issue gains salience. The further causal link between issue salience and PRR parties' electoral performances is not investigated here, due to the inherent limitations and scope of a master thesis.

1.2 *The selection of countries and years*

Scholars who study PRR parties have traditionally focused on the Western European context. The studies of Betz (1994) and Kitschelt and McGann (1995) are two highly influential

examples. The PRR party family has generally been restricted to this geographic region. However, more recent accounts, most notably Mudde (2007), have started discussing a pan-European PRR party family. Pippa Norris (2005) goes even further; she generalises the party family¹ not just to Eastern European parties as Mudde does², but she even includes parties from North America, Peru, Thailand, Mexico, Taiwan and Israel³. The danger of generalising concepts to a wide array of contexts is that you stretch the concept, thus running the risk of watering out the concept itself. The results can easily become superficial and shallow when the entire world is investigated under one concept. This consideration is cleverly formulated by Giovanni Sartori: “[...] we can cover more – in travelling terms – only by saying less, and by saying less in a far less precise manner” (1970:1035). Even though one only expands the context to Eastern- and Central Europe, one will still challenge the mobility of the concept. Hirth (2009) argues that one should be very careful in comparing Western European PRR parties with their Eastern and Central European counterparts. He finds in his empirical study that these parties mobilise voters on different issues and that the comparability is dubious. Taking these considerations into account, the Western European region will be the geographical area of interest for this master thesis.

The selection has so far been limited to Western European countries. However, it is not common to include all Western European countries when studying PRR parties. Finland, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom are excluded more often than not, due to the absence of successful PRR parties in these countries⁴. This exclusion is problematic because one is both selecting on the dependent variable (Geddes 1990), which usually is some variant of PRR party success, and omitting negative cases (Mahoney and Goertz 2004). This is likely to produce biased results. Both Jackman and Volpert (1996) and Golder (2003) argue that this has been a problem in the literature on PRR parties⁵. This will be avoided here by including as many of the Western European countries as the data allow.

Many PRR parties broke through in elections in the 1980’s. Thus, this decade is usually regarded by scholars as the dawn of the PRR party family. Therefore, the period from the start

¹ It should be noted here that Norris (2005) uses the term *radical right*.

² Mudde is however consistently aware of and explicit about the differences between Eastern and Western European populist radical right parties.

³ See Ivarsflaten (2007) for a critical discussion on Norris’ selection of countries.

⁴ One will find studies with case selections that contradict the list I presented, but this is the general tendency.

⁵ Jackman and Volpert and Golder bypass the problem of left-censoring of the dependent variable by using a Tobit model. This allows for analysing (negative) cases with the score zero on the dependent variable.

of the 80's to the present date should ideally be investigated. However, lack of data for most of this period makes it necessary to narrow down the time frame. This master thesis investigates 14 Western European countries in the period 2003 to 2009.

1.3 Key methodological concerns

The two most important methodological concerns for this master thesis relates to the measuring of the variables and the methods of analysis. Survey data are chosen to measure the dependent variable. The reason for this is that the dependent variable calls for a measure of people's evaluation of the salience of the immigration issue. Surveys are compared with a focus on measurement validity in the data and operationalisation chapter.

There are two analysis chapters in this master thesis. The first analysis is of a more qualitative nature in the sense that it is a search for patterns between empirical categories (Ragin 2004). The categories are created and compared with the aim of providing insight into the relationships between the two measures of immigration and the salience of the immigration issue. Here, variation *between* countries is in focus. The second analysis complements the first. A panel analysis with fixed effects is used, and this focuses on the variation *within* countries. The statistical analysis is more suited for testing the hypotheses than the first. Another advantage with the second analysis is that control variables can be included in the model, which means that multivariate models can be investigated. The method and its assumptions are presented in the first part of the second analysis chapter. All together, the combination of two different methods of analysis will provide more insight into how immigration influences the salience of the immigration issue.

1.4 The structure of the thesis

The theoretical framework is presented and discussed in chapter two. This will provide an introduction to demand and supply side explanations from literature on political parties in general and on PRR parties in particular. Thereafter, issue salience theory is presented. The theoretical model used in this master thesis is handled in the last part of the theory chapter. This combines aspects from the PRR party literature with issue salience theory. Two

hypotheses that will provide insight to different aspects of the research question are presented in the theory chapter.

The data and operationalisation of the variables are handled in the third chapter. An important methodological discussion of the choice of survey to measure the dependent variable with is presented here. Measures of immigration and the economy are also handled here. This chapter will provide a descriptive oversight of immigration, the state of the economy and the salience of immigration issue in Western Europe from 2003 to 2009.

There are two analysis chapters. Chapter four is the first, and the variation *between* countries is analysed here. The countries are categorised according to their levels on the dependent variable and the two most important measures of immigration. The aim of this analysis is to investigate whether levels of the independent variables influence the levels of the dependent variable. Chapter five consists of the statistical analysis and a discussion of the method and its assumptions. The *within* variation is in focus here. This method allows for more sophisticated estimations of the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

The sixth, and final, chapter starts with a discussion of the hypotheses based on the results of the empirical analyses. A conclusion will then follow, where the overall findings are summed up. The implications of this master thesis and suggestions for future research are handled in the final section of chapter six.

2. Theoretical framework – The populist radical right and the immigration issue

The cleavage literature, possibly with Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* as the most prominent contribution, focused on society and the conflicting interests of groups within it. The political system was to a certain extent explained as a reflection of this. However, this direct and mechanical effect of societal factors on party support, from sociological to political variables, is challenged in more recent literature. The strategic behaviour of both voters and parties in electoral markets, shaped by electoral systems, has gained more attention. These ideas can be traced back to the seminal work of Anthony Downs (1957). Issue ownership and party placement in ideological spaces have become increasingly more emphasised in the literature. Kitschelt and McGann (1995) and Budge (2001) may serve as examples of scholars who emphasize these types of factors when explaining success for PRR parties or political parties in general.

This theory chapter will first present how the rise of the PRR party family has been explained in the scholarly literature. The discussion will be organised into demand- and supply-side factors for PRR party success⁶. This distinction is quite common in the literature, and it is well-suited here as well. It creates a logic separation between contextual factors that are given and can not be influenced by the PRR parties themselves (demand-side), and factors that are influenced by the party's actions and efficiency (supply-side). It is also a chronologically sound division as the latter have gained the attention of scholars more recently than the former. A discussion on issue salience theory will then follow. This section focuses on the single-most important issue in the political platform of the PRR parties: immigration. The hypotheses will be presented in here.

2.1 Populist radical right parties

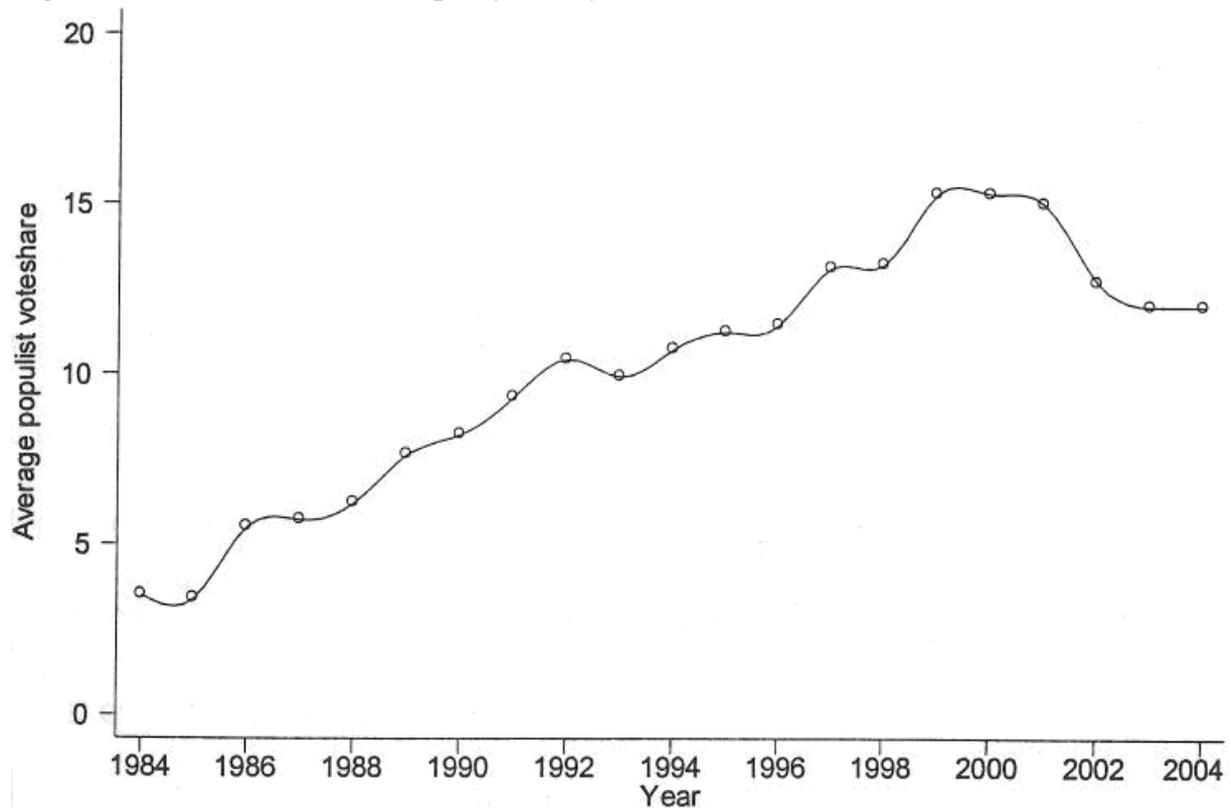
A host of names is used to label the PRR party family. The choice of label is usually very important because the parties are often a part of the analysis as a variable. It is for example common to use the electoral support for the PRR parties as dependent variable. The different labels cover different groups of parties, although there is much overlapping. Thus, the choice

⁶This division of explanatory factors is common in the PRR literature, where it (to my knowledge) was first used by Herbert Kitschelt (1995).

of label for these parties can influence the selection of cases. This, however, is not the case here because the parties (or their vote share) are not a variable in the analyses. Neither does it affect the selection of cases. The label populist radical right (PRR) is used here, following Mudde (2007) whenever I refer to these parties. When referring to other scholarly works, I use the terminology of the author as choice of name may have influenced that particular work. For a further discussion on the names and concepts, see Mudde (2007) and Fennema (1997).

It seems plausible to say that the mass politisation of the immigration issue began in the 1980's. Arzheimer points out that a new wave of rightist parties started to gain momentum from the early 1980's: "All of a sudden, parties that were dubbed as "extreme," "radical," "populist," or "new" right proved highly successful at the polls in countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland" (2009:259). Events in this period, such as the Scandinavian Progressive Parties newfound interest in the immigration issue and the increasing success for anti-immigration parties from 1984 in many Western European countries (Ignazi 1992; Fennema 1997:473-474; Arzheimer and Carter 2006:427), make it reasonable to regard this as the dawn of the PRR party family.

Figure 1 - The rise of the PRR party family⁷



Source: Ivarsflaten (2005a: 18)

Figure 1 shows how the support for this party family has grown, and that they have become increasingly more relevant for Western European politics. Many have tried to explain this development and the following sections will provide an overview of this literature.

2.2 Demand-side

Since the 1950s, political scientists have focused on the composition of societies when trying to explain the political system. Different segments of the population had different interests, and the conflicts between these interests were reflected in the political system. Marxist theory with its emphasis on class struggles is a well-known example. The depth of a political conflict would be related to the size of the groups involved. Rising numbers of urban workers would

⁷ “The figure shows the average vote share of the eight rising populist right parties in national parliamentary elections between 1984 and 2004. The eight rising parties are: The French *Front National*, the Austrian *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, the Belgian *Vlaams Belang* (previously *Vlaams Blok*), the Danish *Danske Folkeparti* (previously *Fremskridtspartiet*), the Swiss *Schweizerische Volkspartei*, the Norwegian *Fremskrittspartiet*, the Italian *Lega Nord*, and the Dutch *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*” (Ivarsflaten 2005a: 18).

for example give the labour or communist party more support in elections. Politics was explained by relating it to observable changes in society. Nevertheless, such a relationship is unclear when it comes to the electoral success of PRR parties and the scope of immigration. PRR parties are first and foremost concerned with restricting immigration and opposing the multicultural society, but whether their success truly hinges on the number of immigrants and asylum seekers in their respective countries is a contested question. Terri Givens (2002) tests the effect of socioeconomic variables on the success of radical right parties. Although she finds that high unemployment and immigration is associated with higher electoral support for radical right parties, she also claims that the socioeconomic variables are insufficient in explaining variation in the dependent variable and that “[...] cause and effect are not clear” (Givens 2002: 156)⁸. This seems to be the general perception of the demand-side explanatory models.

The demand side explanations can be traced back to the early generations of scholars who studied the support for political parties, with Lipset and Rokkan as two of the most prominent. They explained support for different parties by focusing on cleavages in the electorate. A *cleavage* is stronger and more long-lasting than a *conflict* (Flora et al. 1999:34). That is quite clear in Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan’s (1967) seminal book. The cleavage concept will be briefly discussed here because it is the foundation of the demand-side theories and shows how societal development has been conceived to influence politics.

The cleavage concept has evolved over time as Zuckerman's (1975) discussion about cleavages shows. He claims that Weber and Marx's use of the word was tightly connected to *class*. Flora, Kuhnle and Urwin (1999:35) also draw this line to Marx’s concepts, where class struggles emerged as a consequence of the evolution of industrial capitalism. A person’s class was for Weber determined by the person’s objective position in the economy. For Marx, this objective criterion was not enough; “Classes do not constitute themselves as such until they participate in political conflicts as organized groups...” (Zuckerman 1975:232). There has to be some form of political organisation; the mere existence of a group that has the potential of being mobilised is not sufficient. This resembles Rokkan's terminology, where latent and manifest cleavages were central concepts; “In Rokkan's view these frequently 'latent' differences break out at critical junctures and take on 'manifest' organisational and

⁸ She finds these relationships between the variables in Austria and France, but not in Germany.

institutional forms in the process of political system-building” (Flora et al. 1999:7). Zuckerman (1975:234) argues that *cleavages* originally were, in Lipset and Rokkan’s usage, a social phenomenon where conflict groups organized in opposition to other such groups. These social cleavages are politicized “[...] as they become issues of large-scale conflict and become tied to political parties. Implicit here is the conceptualization of political cleavage as a type of political division based on major social divisions” (Zuckerman 1975:234). Cleavages may in other words exist in a society, but they are not political until they are made manifest through political organising. This is highly comparable with the division between demand and supply side factors in the literature on PRR parties; the cleavage is transmissible to the demand in the electorate (or distribution of ideologies in the electorate with Downsian⁹ terminology) and the supply side revolves around the political organising.

2.2.1 Immigration

Migration has changed the ethnic, religious and cultural composition of Western European societies. It is perhaps not the migration, the movement of people, in itself that causes political reactions. Transnational migration has, according to Falter (1996:230) the following effect on xenophobia in Germany: It leads to ethno-cultural heterogenization, which in turn leads to more xenophobia and hostility towards foreigners¹⁰. This specific example from German politics is presented here in order to show the supposed causal mechanism. Norris (2005:4) is in line with this view when she, on a more general basis, claims that the rising salience of cultural protectionism is a response to migration and globalisation. This new salience of issues associated with the multicultural society has according to those who emphasise demand-side factors created a demand for restrictive policies towards immigration.

In Downsian terms, one could say that a societal change changes the distribution of ideologies in the citizenry, in this case seen as negative opinions and attitudes towards the multicultural society. There is a shift in the opinions of the electorate which could potentially be utilised by new (or established for that matter) parties. Norris claims that “... [a]lternative variants of the demand-side thesis suggest that the rise of the radical right is fueled by shifts in public opinion” (2005:166). She claims that these shifts are caused by increasingly multicultural and

⁹ I am here referring to Downs (1957). His theory is presented later.

¹⁰ Falter also claims that within-society disparities and right extremism contribute to increased xenophobia as well.

ethnically heterogeneous societies. Anderson (1996) finds that support for the two progress parties of Norway and Denmark was driven by increasing numbers of foreigners in these countries.

The construction of in- and out-groups, where those who have cultural or ethnic features that do not correspond to the image of *the nation*¹¹ are placed in the out-group, has been stressed by many scholars in the literature on PRR parties and on social psychology (Mudde 2007; Lubbers et al. 2002; Brader et al. 2008; Pettigrew 2002). People who fall into the out-group category are typically of an immigrant background and they are in the words of Mudde “outside the nation, within the state” (2007: 69)¹². The perceived threat of the out-group is often regarded as twofold; some emphasise the economic threat of immigrants (Givens 2005; Golder 2003), while others claim that the cultural threat is more important (Ivarsflaten 2005b; Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007:413; Sides and Citrin 2007; Messina 2007), and there also seems to be some variation between the countries in regards to what type of arguments PRR politicians use (Simonsen et al. 2009).

Those who are sceptical of the explanations of the demand-side generally have a hard time seeing how immigration can *cause* electoral success for parties that are restrictive towards this. They do however agree that immigration or presence of foreigners creates an opportunity for these parties, without conceding much explanatory power to such theories. Mudde (2007) calls this a search for *the perfect breeding ground*; an activity where the researcher tries to find the structural factors that maximise the electoral support for PRR parties. The fact that immigration has been going on for a much longer time than PRR have been successful, may support this view. Messina (2007:76-77) is in line with this view when he argues that the increase in the support for anti-immigrant groups did not coincide with the first wave of post-war immigration. He dates this wave of surplus labour immigration to the period 1945 to 1979, whereas the popularity of the anti-immigration groups increased mainly after the 1980's.

Immigration can, as many other social phenomena, be both objectively observed and subjectively perceived. Objective changes are here understood as actual changes in the sense that they are observable, for example through statistics. Subjective changes are perceived by

¹¹ For a discussion on the concept of the nation and nationalism, see Benedict Anderson (2006) and Eric Hobsbawm (1992)

¹² Mudde (2007:69-73) makes a quite clear distinction here between Eastern and Western Europe. The group *outside the nation, within the state* generally consists of the immigrant population in Western Europe. It is to a much larger extent made up of indigenous ethnic minorities in Eastern Europe.

the voters, or people in general for that matter, but they do not necessarily correspond to reality, although they very well could. Bergh and Bjørklund (2009) analysed survey data where the respondents were told to estimate how many immigrants live in Norway. They found that those who live in a municipality with few immigrants generally have too high estimates about the number of immigrants at the national level. The fewer immigrants who live in your neighbourhood, the more immigrants you think there are on the national level. The respondents residing in Oslo were generally more correct in their estimates, although they too estimated that there were more immigrants than official statistics show. Bergh and Bjørklund (2009: 362) found a similar pattern in Sweden and Denmark, whereas Sides and Citrin (2007) found the same tendency in a sample of 20 European countries. Voters vote according to the knowledge they possess¹³, regardless of how this corresponds to national statistics. So, incorrect knowledge about immigration may influence the attitudes of voters, as Sides and Citrin (2007) argue, making the relationship between the objective numbers of immigrants and the act of voting on the immigration issue less direct.

Just how objective numbers on immigration relate to attitudes towards this group is not clear. Mudde (2007:217-219) points out that there is a missing link here; we can not see how the macro-level structures influence the opinions of the voters at the micro-level. He calls for an increased attention to meso-level factors. The media is one such factor that could partly explain the relationship between the macro- and the micro-level. Mass media have according to Mutz “[...] displaced personal relationships, leaving people susceptible to a new, more powerful and centralized reference group in the form of mediated representation of mass collectives” (1998:268-269). The media have the power to influence the opinions of many people at the time. This effect can be decisive for attitudes towards immigrants (Brader et al. 2008; Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007). Lise Togeby (2004) claims that the importance of the immigration/refugee issue has fluctuated according to media campaigns on this issue. Such considerations may help us understand why there is a lot of unexplained variance and inconsistency between objective measures of immigration and its effect on politics.

2.2.2 The social basis for support

¹³ This can be related to Downs' (1957) concept of *costs of information*, where the next unit of information always is more expensive than the last one.

The dealignment thesis suggests that the ties between voters and parties have loosened. Such a situation may have been beneficial for PRR parties, who could attain support from voters that traditionally supported other parties. However, parties that rely on the support of disloyal voters who move from other parties may suffer the same fate as their competitors in the next election. The weakening of partisan cleavages could in other words both make and break the PRR parties and their electoral support may be more shifting and unstable over time (Norris 2005:135). Oddbjørn Knutsen (2006) investigated whether class voting is in decline or not. He found that class voting is in decline, but it is not gone. The classical class parties, Communists, Social Democrats and Liberals, are still those who have the strongest link to a social class. The Greens, Christian Democrats and Radical Right parties are found to have weaker anchorage in social classes.

One should be extremely careful in comparing the traditional totalitarian fascist parties of the last century with more modern rightist movements (Kitschelt and McGann 1995:43; Ignazi 1992). In fact, extreme right parties are according to Kitschelt and McGann (1995:277) less successful the closer they are to neofascist patterns. *The Sweden Democrats'* success in the 2010 Swedish Parliamentary election could partly be explained by the party's recent efforts to distance itself from its neofascist past. PRR and fascist parties do, however, have one quite important similarity; they both had to find space in an electoral market already covered from left to right by other parties, be it Marxists, liberalists or conservatives. The different social groups or classes of voters were already convinced by other parties¹⁴. Being unable to make stable bonds of loyalty with any group in particular, they had to attain support from all or most classes, regions and occupations (Fennema 1997:486). This makes them vulnerable to issues that split their voters according to other interest (Ivarsflaten 2005c). Something as fundamental to politics as the economy may be one such issue (Coffé et al. 2007), as the discussion on issue salience later in this chapter shows.

Most parties seek support from all social classes, hence the term catch-all parties. However, most parties are more successful with some social groups than with others, thereby making these particular groups the basis for their electoral support (Betz 1994:150). PRR parties do not have one core group of loyal voters. Those who are overrepresented in voting for the extreme right are according to Arzheimer “[...] men, voters who are either young or rather

¹⁴ This is the general tendency, but it is not true for all PRR parties because not all of them are new. Ignazi (1992) labels the latter *old right wing parties*.

old, those with a low level of formal education, and amongst the manual workers, the petty bourgeoisie, and those in routine nonmanual employment” (2009:259). This tendency has become clearer with time, especially as most people with higher education seem to have a distaste for xenophobic rhetoric. Hans-Georg Betz’ (1994:150-166) description of the changes in the populist right’s social basis is quite telling on this account. He points out that both the Danish *Progress Party* and the French *Front National* attracted voters from the middle and upper class, people with higher education, the self-employed, skilled workers in addition to the working class. They were in other words true catch-all parties. Betz claims that the composition changed during the 80’s; at the same time as their emphasis on the immigration issue became more prominent. Betz labels this transition a “[...] proletarianization of their social basis” (1994:155). The initial support from the educated middle-class was weak and waned during the 80’s. Thus, the typical populist right voter of the 90’s was usually from a lower class and had low to medium levels of education (Betz 1994:166). This is the overall general tendency, but there are exceptions. Both Betz (1994) and Lubbers, Gijssberts and Scheepers (2002:347) point out that *Front National* and *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* attained support from the middle classes in addition to the support from lower classes.

2.2.3 Unemployment – does it help the populist radical right?

Unemployment has received much attention as an explanatory factor in the literature. It should be noted initially that the focus in this part is on unemployment rates. These are generally measured on an aggregate level and compared with national election results, also on an aggregate level. Drawing inferences from such data about voting behaviour at the individual level could lead to an ecological fallacy, as Givens (2005:71) points out. We may be able to make inferences about opportunities and voter potential, but “[...] how macro-level factors exactly influence micro-level behaviour remains largely undertheorized” (Mudde 2007:230). This means that this section focuses on how unemployment affects PRR success, and not how the unemployed as a social group relate to these parties.

The results of empirical analyses seeking evidence for the alleged relationship between unemployment and electoral success for PRR parties are often weak, contradicting and complicated (Mudde 2007:206). Some investigate this on a regional level (Sides and Citrin 2007; Givens 2005) and others look for patterns on a national level (Arzheimer and Carter

2006). Some argue that other factors, such as immigration, play a mediating role (Golder 2003). There does not seem to be a straight-forward relationship in this matter. In the following, the most prominent theoretical expectations will be presented.

Arzheimer and Carter (2006:434) find that low unemployment makes extreme right parties perform better in elections. Pia Knigge (1998) similarly found that people are more prone¹⁵ to voting for an extreme right-wing party when unemployment is low. This seems to be the most usual finding. Arzheimer and Carter are not certain why the extreme right wing benefit from lower levels of unemployment, but they argue that it is plausible that voters have more trust in more established parties in times of high unemployment. Coffé, Heyndels and Vermeir (2007) provide another explanation from an issue salience perspective: *Vlaams Blok* performs better when the economy is not a problem, because this means that the immigration issue can receive more attention. Lubbers et al. (2002) too find that a higher unemployment rate decreases the support for extreme right-wing parties in a multi-level analysis, but this finding is not statistically significant on the aggregate level. However, their analysis shows that unemployed people are overrepresented in voting for the populist right. Thus, it may seem that the relationship found between unemployment and PRR support at the individual level goes in the opposite direction from the findings on the aggregate level.

Despite the abovementioned findings, there are reasons to believe that the effect of unemployment on PRR support is weak. The aggregated national level may also not be the best level of analysis for investigating the effect of unemployment. Givens (2005) carries out her analysis on the regional level in France, Germany and Austria. She argues that national-level analyses will be unable to identify the variance within each country. The populist right parties could be successful in parts of the country, where they have their bastions of support, and almost completely absent and irrelevant in other parts. The Italian *Lega Nord* and the Belgian *Vlaams Blok/Vlaams Belang* can serve as examples of such regionally concentrated parties. Givens (2005) found some contradicting results in her analysis; the effects of unemployment were positive and significant in France and Austria, and not significant in Germany. This may lend support to the claim that demand-factors merely facilitate the potential, and that factors on the supply-side can explain why some are able to seize the chance, while others are not.

¹⁵ Knigge does not use election results as dependent variable. She uses survey-data from the Eurobarometer where the respondents are asked who they would vote for if an election was held tomorrow.

Some scholars, such as Lubbers and Scheepers (2001:432-433) and Golder (2003) argue that an analysis of unemployment rates alone will miss parts of the picture. They claim that some groups of voters perceive an ethnic competition. A typical argument from such a perspective would be “immigrants steal jobs”, a popular statement used by politicians such as Jörg Haider and Jean-Marie Le Pen (Golder 2003; Lorenz 2009:219; Kjølsvædt 2009:270; Givens 2002). Golder (2003) labels this “the materialist argument”, seeing as those who are sympathetic to this notion are afraid of having their material well-being reduced as a consequence of the influx of immigrants in the job-market. This is also in line with the social psychological literature on *relative deprivation*. Pettigrew claims that relative deprivation “[...] is strongest when there exists a clearly advantaged outgroup that is perceived to be responsible for the ingroup’s disadvantage” (2002:360). To claim that the immigrant population is clearly advantaged would probably be to stretch the argument too far, but if they are assumed to get the jobs that the in-group is losing, they could be considered advantaged from an in-group point of view. If unemployment is high, and there is also a significant immigrant community in the area, some people might blame the immigrants for the scarcity of jobs, or their disadvantage. If there is such a mediating relationship between the two factors’ (immigration and unemployment) effect on PRR party popularity, they should be studied with an interaction model (Brambor et al. 2006). Golder (2003: 460) finds a positive and significant interaction effect of immigration and unemployment on populist party support, meaning that unemployment only increases the support for these parties when there are many foreigners in the country.

The discussion on the effect of unemployment does not lead to any clear theoretical expectations, yet. There does however seem to be most evidence supporting the claim for a negative (and weak) effect of unemployment, meaning that higher unemployment reduces PRR support. A potential interaction effect is also relevant from an issue salience perspective. Therefore, the formulation of a concrete hypothesis will be presented in the salience section below.

2.3 Supply-side

Whereas the demand-side is an approach well-suited to grasp *what* kind of policies (and thus parties) that are wanted by the electorate and *why* they want it, the supply-side provides explanations for *how* parties try to tap into this demand. This approach is much more actor and institution oriented and revolves around strategic behaviour of political parties in electoral markets. The following sections will provide an introduction to the supply-side theories. The discussion will start with the early work of Anthony Downs (1957), because this is the foundation for more recent accounts of strategic behaviour in electoral markets. Throughout the literature review, there will be a particular focus on PRR parties and factors that restrict and further their efficiency in winning votes.

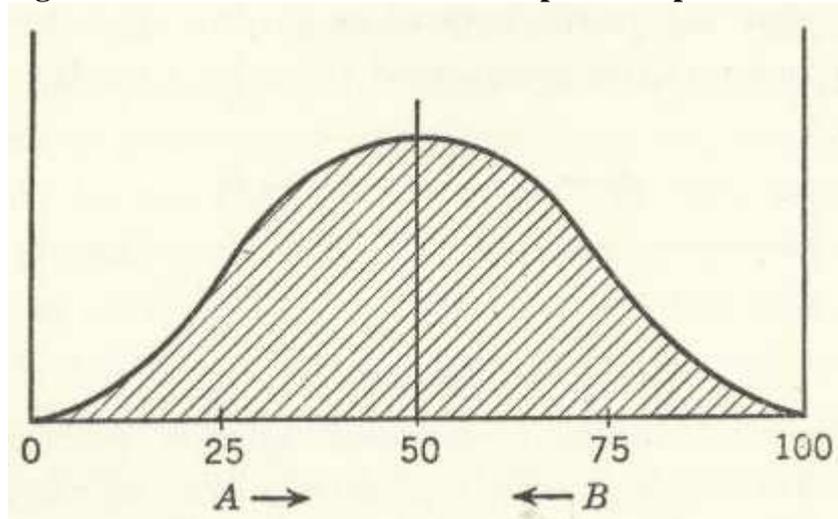
2.3.1 Policy spaces

Unlike Lipset and Rokkan (1967), Downs (1957) used an economic approach to explain the mechanics of party systems in *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. His economic approach has contributed with conceptual tools of great value to political scientists. Downs pleaded that his theoretical models were “[...] tested primarily by the accuracy of their predictions rather than by the reality of their assumptions” (1957:21). Sympathetic to this view, Sartori (2005:305) claims that such oversimplistic models are never meant to give a precise description of reality, but offer oversight and bring into prominence basic features that otherwise get lost in the details.

Anthony Downs’ (1957) theoretical models are based on parties’ behaviour. They move strategically in policy spaces in order to win elections. Usually the party that gets the most votes wins, and since most voters can be found around the median voter, parties focus their attention towards this strategic part of the electorate. Downs’ (1957:118) example of the distribution of voters in a two-party system shows how the parties A and B are drawn towards the median voter (Figure 2). They are not afraid of losing voters on the flanks in this situation because the profit in terms of new voters won is far greater. The parties in two-party systems strive to resemble their opponent, whereas parties in multi-party systems do the opposite; they ideologically distinguish themselves from their opponents (Downs 1957: 126-127)¹⁶.

¹⁶ This is a simplistic presentation of party competition. Shepsle and Bonchek (1997) discuss more complicated models than the ones presented here.

Figure 2 - The median voter and centripetal competition

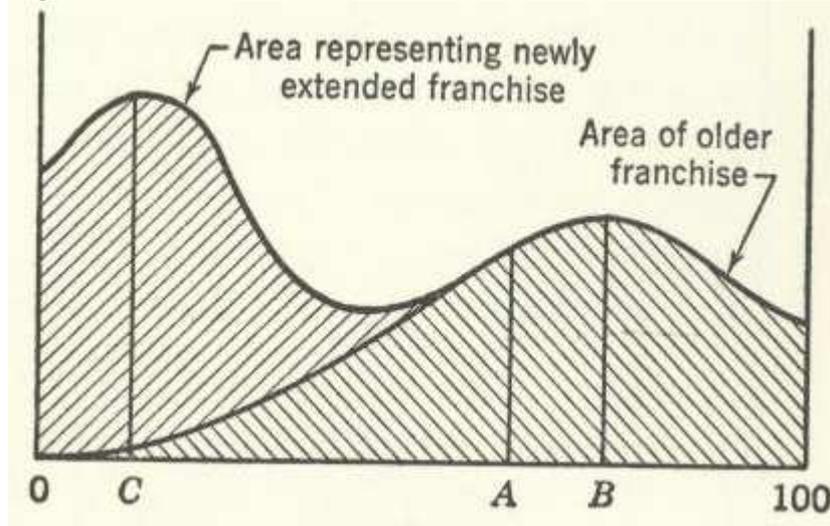


Source: Downs (1957: 118)

Parties place themselves according to where they believe they can maximise the number of votes. The political system reaches a state of equilibrium after a while when no parties will profit from changing their position. There will be no change in the number of parties and the position of the parties unless a change in the distribution of voters takes place (Downs 1957:123).

Downs (1957:118) claims that a new party has the best chance for success when it has the opportunity to either “steal” a large portion of the voters from the established parties, or when it manages to get in between the established party and its voters. He uses the extension of suffrage to the working class in England as an example (Figure 3) of a crucial incident that caused a shift in the distribution of voters, as he labels it.

Figure 3 - A shift in the distribution



Source: Downs (1957: 129)

The shift that can be seen in Figure 3 completely changes the electoral market. This creates breaks for new parties who are able to supply the new demand. Downs' example shows how the British *Labour* party were able to break through in the party system. The following sections will handle policy spaces in a PRR context.

2.3.2 Taking advantage of policy spaces – external factors

An open policy space provides the opportunity for a PRR party to gain success, but it is far from sufficient. How efficient the PRR parties are at utilising the policy space depends on factors both internal and external to the party¹⁷. The external factors are elaborated upon first and are followed by a discussion of the internal factors.

Kitschelt and McGann (1995) used party competition factors as central independent variables in their influential book *The Radical Right in Western Europe*. They argue that the voters may turn to a radical right party if they are disaffected enough with the established parties. This is in line with the theories of Downs (1957), where the centripetal competition draws the parties towards the political centre, where the median voter can be found. Kitschelt and McGann (1995:275) argue that the extreme right in Western Europe can find their niche in the electoral market if the major parties on the left and right side converge in the middle. This is a situation

¹⁷ Mudde (2007) introduces the internal and external distinction in his book on PRR parties.

which arises when they alternate in position and join coalition governments. Thus, the convergence, the decrease of policy space between the major left and the major right party, may create the opportunity for the radical right parties. The coalition aspect of Kitschelt and McGann's theory allows for a congestion of parties in the centre in multiparty systems, something which Downs did not consider. A somewhat similar argument has been developed by van der Brug et al. (2005: 548)¹⁸. They argue that the convergence in the centre creates an opening on the right flank. From this perspective, the relevant space for the PRR is decided by the left-right position of the mainstream right-wing competitor. The further this party moves towards the centre, the bigger the space for the anti-immigrant party.

The strategic positioning is not only about finding the best ideological place for oneself, but it can be equally important to block out other parties by taking or approaching their stance on issues, and thereby effectively reducing the size of the policy space for that party. Lubbers et al. (2002) point out that *the Conservatives* in the United Kingdom, *Cristlich-Soziale Union* in Germany and *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* in the Netherlands have taken a restrictive stance towards immigration. Other, more radical restrictionist parties, such as the relatively unsuccessful *die Republikaner* in Germany and *British National Party* in the United Kingdom, may therefore have a hard time finding space in the party system. However, this is a strategy that could be counterproductive. It could make tough stands towards immigration more legitimate and hence increase the chances for the PRR party having success in elections (Arzheimer 2009:262). The opportunities for a PRR party in the electoral markets are hence influenced by the behaviour and positions of the other parties.

The institutional framework has also received a lot of attention on the supply-side account. This does not primarily influence the demand for a PRR party, but rather influence the possibilities of a PRR getting seats in the parliament. Jackman and Volpert (1996) conclude in their study that the price of a proportional party system¹⁹ is that it provides opportunities for extreme right parties. A similar effect was found by Golder (2003) and Swank and Betz (2003). The former found that although immigration created a demand for populist parties, "[...] electoral institutions influence the extent to which this demand is translated into actual votes" (Golder 2003: 461).

¹⁸ Norris (2005) also discusses this argument thoroughly.

¹⁹ The institutional framework of party systems will not be handled in detail here. For a discussion on party systems, see Lijphart (1999).

2.3.3 Taking advantage of policy spaces – internal factors

Finally, the attention is turned to the internal qualities of the PRR party and how it may influence its own fate. The focus here will first be on the party organisation before the rather intangible phenomenon *charismatic leadership* is discussed. In regards to the former, the same rules apply to the PRR as to any other party; a well-structured organisation will perform better than one that is not (Lubbers et al. 2002). Ivarsflaten (2005a) links this to the ability to communicate the party's policies to its potential voters. She focuses on visibility and credibility, to vital aspects of getting ahead in the competition for votes. The infrastructure of the PRR party is an important explanatory factor of PRR success for Mudde (2007) too, but he also rightly points out that there are problems when it comes to the operationalisation of such variables. Measures of the quality of the party structure are either of a rather low validity (for example through expert surveys) or low generalisability (case studies). Nonetheless, it seems plausible that a well-structured party is likely to be more efficient and more successful in an electoral market.

A prominent feature of the Western European PRR parties is their flamboyant charismatic leaders. Many of them are highly visible in European politics, even though they often do not have corresponding electoral success to show for. Nevertheless, the effect of the charismatic leader does not seem to be considered very important in the scholarly literature. Both Mudde (2007: 262) and Ivarsflaten (2005a: 28) argue that the gain of having a controversial and highly visible leader is most important in the short-term, at a breakthrough stage. The strong, controversial leader may also be regarded as a weakness. The entire party becomes very dependent on one single person. Bos and van der Brug (2010) point to the collapse of the Dutch PRR party *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* after their leader was slain. Another plausible negative effect of a strong leader is that they have a tendency of hampering internal democracy and the aspirations of talented party members (Mudde 2007: 271-272). Charisma is also a property that is not well-suited for empirical research. Both the issues of validity and generalisability as discussed above are relevant here as well, but one problem in particular is circularity; the leader of a successful party is likely to be regarded²⁰ as charismatic, whereas it is unlikely that

²⁰ Van der Brug et al. are targeting their critique at expert surveys.

the leader of an unsuccessful party will be considered as such (van der Brug et al. 2005). One is therefore likely to measure whether success affects success when using such measures.

2.4 Issue salience

2.4.1 What is issue salience?

In salience theory, parties compete in trying to get *their* issue to the top of the agenda. The party wants the voters' evaluations of the candidates in an election campaign to be about its favourite topic (Budge 2001; Budge and Farlie 1983; Edwards III et al. 1995). It is therefore the *emphasis* put on different issues that is important. An implication of this is that parties will talk past each other, seldom go into a direct discussion about the topic at hand (Budge and Farlie 1983), but rather try to pull the spotlight towards the issue they own, meaning an issue they have a track record and a reputation of performing well on (Budge 2001: 62). This means that when the left party emphasises welfare in a debate, the right party will counter with arguments regarding taxation, and not welfare. This goes both ways. In this regard the PRR party will try to keep the attention on the immigration issue.

Edwards III, Mitchell and Welch (1995) claim that an issue has a significant effect on politics only when the incumbents are evaluated on this particular issue. Similarly, Fournier, Blais, Nadeau, Gidengil and Nevitte (2003) conclude that the performance of the government on an issue does not matter much as long as that issue is not important. Both the potential gains and losses in terms of voter evaluation of a party's performance on an issue are much bigger when the issue is important. Therefore, it is highly favourable for a party if an issue it "owns" is regarded as salient.

According to the salience perspective, parties compete by fronting their own issues. But what does it mean to *own* an issue? Budge argues that a party owns an issue when "[...] they have a track record of carrying out the most popular preferences [...]" (2001: 62). They are in other words associated with their past performances, and can hence not move around very much along political dimensions. This can be linked to Ivarsson's (2005a: 26-35) discussion of *credibility*. The credibility of a party on a given issue is dependent on its history (policy

legacy) and its present qualities (party organisation). That places the parties firmly in the ideological landscape. This makes things a lot easier for the voters. It simplifies the search for the appropriate party to vote for; the voter votes for the party that owns the issue that is important at the time being (Budge and Farlie 1983: 25-26).

2.4.2 Immigration - the populist radical right party's issue

Knigge (1998:255) claims that extreme right-wing parties in six Western European countries have narrowed down their attention from a wider range of issues to mainly focusing on immigration issues. The parties are characterised as being against multiculturalism and for restrictive policies towards immigration and asylum seekers. They implicitly or explicitly advocate xenophobia, racism and national chauvinism. Furthermore, they are sceptical to a strong state, but in favour of more police and tougher punishment of criminals. Arzheimer (2009:259) claims that although the extreme right party family, as he labels it, is very heterogeneous, its strong concern for immigration issues still distinguishes it from other parties. Immigration is according to Arzheimer the single most important issue for such parties. The signature issue for radical right parties today is, according to Norris, “[...] the threat of ‘the other,’ driven by patterns of immigration, asylum seekers, and multiculturalism” (2005:132). The emphasis on the immigration issue in this master thesis does not mean that the PRR parties are considered to be single-issue parties. They do have other issues, but the point here is that the immigration is by far the most important issue for PRR parties. It is on the immigration issue the PRR have gained the most credibility. No one would believe that the PRR party would carry out liberal immigration policies if it got in position. This is the issue they own, and their electoral success is therefore likely to hinge on the salience of their issue. Whether the salience of this issue in turn depends on the influx of immigration is however not certain.

As mentioned above, the signature issue of populist right parties is the threat of ‘the other’. It does not seem like the fear of other people is randomly scattered around on all foreign people. Muslims are by many PRR parties considered as the most important threat on both the national and the international stage (Mudde 2007:70,84; Betz 1994:173). This is empirically quite obvious, especially after the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center in 2001. The anti-Muslim film *Fitna*, made by the charismatic Dutch politician Geert Wilders is one

example of such agitation, and the heated debates in the aftermath of the Danish caricatures is another (Heie 2009:199). Such a polarised debate climate raises the attentiveness towards the immigration issue. Anti-immigration sentiments are the most important attitudinal variables for explaining populist right voting (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart 2007:409; Lubbers and Scheepers 2001:441; Lubbers et al. 2002). However, these attitudes do not influence politics significantly as long as they are not salient. Fournier et al. (2003) argue that there is an interaction effect between attitudes and issue salience; attitudes are not enough, they must also be salient. Lise Togeby (2004: 37) claims in a similar fashion that opinions about an issue has few political consequences as long as the issue is not salient, but when the issue is on the agenda, it is much more likely to influence both voters and politicians. Salience of the immigration issues could be a more important factor than people's policy positions for explaining the upswing in electoral support for rightist parties in Denmark. It is according to Togeby (2004: 37) widely assumed that the Danes' opinions towards immigrants and refugees have moved to the right. Contrary to popular belief, the Danes' opinions towards immigrants and refugees have not changed much, but the salience of the immigration issue has increased significantly.

We know more or less which attitudes favour PRR parties. This chapter has shown that the immigration issue is the most important issue for the PRR parties and that their electoral success should, according to issue salience theory, hinge on the importance of the immigration issue. If the immigration issue is not salient, the PRR party is unlikely to achieve electoral success. Thus, finding out what makes immigration important should be a prioritised task in the literature on PRR parties. Demand and supply side theories have also been discussed in the theory chapter. This discussion has shown that immigration frequently serves as an independent variable for explaining electoral success for PRR parties, and that the relationships found are often weak and contradicting. It has been pointed out that Bergh and Bjørklund (2009) and Sides and Citrin (2007) found discrepancies between objective measures of immigration and perceived levels of immigration. If people's perceptions of immigration levels do not correspond well to official statistics on immigration, then their evaluation of the salience of the immigration issue may also be somewhat detached from objective measures of immigration. If the latter is the case, then this may help explain why immigration levels seem to have a weak relationship with support for PRR parties. The disagreement about the causal claims justifies investigating how immigration influences the salience of the immigration issue.

Because the literature on PRR parties has focused on the electoral success, we do not have any empirically well-founded expectation as to how immigration influences salience. However, the demand side assumption of a positive relationship between immigration and vote share for PRR parties, will form the basis for this hypothesis²¹:

H1: Higher levels of immigration increase the salience of the immigration issue.

2.4.3 Competing issues – the vulnerable immigration issue

A discussion on the competition among issues in reaching the top of the agenda should consider a theoretical threshold in regard to the number of issues that are relevant. Is there room for several important issues at the same time? How many issues do voters base their final voting decision on? A theoretical discussion on this subject is necessary because it will affect the operationalisation of the dependent variable in the next chapter. Philip E. Converse claimed that “[...] people generally have only a few issues that are particularly important to them and to which they pay attention” (Edwards III et al. 1995: 110-111). This is consistent with Downs’ (1957) concept of “information costs”, where the next unit of information always costs more than the previous one. To widen ones capacity is expensive, it is therefore cheaper to prioritise. Budge and Farlie (1983: 26, 151-152) distinguish between the voters’ maximum issue capacity and the number of issues that actually influence the vote. They claim, regarding the former, that the communication between party and voter becomes inefficient and the voter will probably get confused when too many issues are on the agenda. They estimate this threshold to be at around six to seven issues. It is unlikely that so many issues have a relevant effect on a person’s voting. They estimate that somewhere between one (seldom) to five issues influence the vote. It is likely that there is considerable individual variation in this matter. Different people have different capacity for political issues. Education, general interest in politics and so forth will probably influence this. However, all individuals must prioritise at some point, and Converse’s estimate of “a few issues” seems reasonable.

²¹ This argument is explained more thoroughly in the final section of this chapter, where the theoretical model for this thesis is established.

As previously mentioned, the PRR parties had to find space in political systems where the political space was already filled from left to right. They could as such not expect to compete along the same dimensions as the established parties. The established parties had attained issue ownership on most important political issues, especially those associated with the left-right socioeconomic axis. The PRR parties were therefore “[...] only likely to rise on issues that cut across the main political axis” (Ivarsflaten 2005a: 81). This was seemingly the only way of gaining foothold in the party system, but this leaves the PRR parties vulnerable to the salience of issues on the dimension that they initially had to cross. Van der Brug and van Spanje (2009) argue that the opinions of voters are structured along two dimensions; the traditional economic dimension and a new cultural dimension. Political parties are only structured along the former. This means that voters who have a rightist stance on the cultural dimension (restrictive to immigration) and a leftist stance on the economic dimension (which is generally in the interest of the working class) are left with a tough decision: to vote either according to the economic or according to the cultural interests. The political opinions of the voter will in this situation not automatically determine the outcome because the voter will have two equally appropriate parties to vote for. The decision will therefore depend on the voter’s weighing of the two dimensions. This is not as stable over time and this will, according to van der Brug and van Spanje (2009), lead to increased volatility. The voter will emphasise the dimension that is most salient at the time of the election; “Elections are therefore increasingly decided by the issues that dominate the agenda during the campaign” (van der Brug and van Spanje 2009: 329). An important implication of this is that the PRR parties’ voters will be uncertain and increasingly disloyal every time economic issues are salient.

The discussion above has assumed that the PRR voters have leftist economic interests, but that is not completely true. As mentioned in the section on social basis: several PRR parties also enjoy the support of members of the middle class. *Front National* and *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* were mentioned as the most prominent examples in this regard. This will still render the PRR parties vulnerable to the salience of economic issues. Ivarsflaten (2005c: 490) calls the division among PRR voters in economic interests “the germ of destruction” for the PRR parties. She also points out that PRR parties in general have low credibility in economic matters. The support for the PRR may in this situation not be affected by the conflicting interests of the *individual* voter, but by conflicting interests of *groups* of PRR

voters. Coffé et al. (2007) investigated support for and participation of *Vlaams Blok* in municipal elections in Flanders in 2000. They found that *Vlaams Blok* performed better in more prosperous communities. They also found that a low unemployment rate made participation by the *Vlaams Blok* more likely. They concluded that this could be explained by the concept of issue salience: “As economic issues become less salient, issues such as immigration get more attention and this benefits the *Vlaams Blok*” (Coffé et al. 2007: 20). This supports the argument that there is a competition between the immigration issue and economic issues, where the former is dependent of the absence of the latter.

This discussion has shown that economic issues are not only splitting PRR parties with a homogeneous proletarian/working-class group of voters, but also PRR parties that draw support from both the working and the middle class. Consequently, PRR parties should be more successful in elections when economic issues are not on the agenda. Coffé et al. (2007) found that a prosperous economy facilitated increased support for the PRR party in Belgium. However, the demand-side discussion in this chapter has pointed out that there is a perceived competition from foreigners in the job market, so that immigration is more controversial when the unemployment rate is high. The argument “immigrants steal jobs”, which has been stated by PRR politicians and studied by PRR scholars, was discussed earlier. Golder’s (2003) article can serve as an example here. He found that higher levels of unemployment increase the electoral success of populist right parties as long as there are many foreigners in the country. Foreigners are, from this perspective, more controversial when they are many and when the economy is considered a problem. So, how the well-being of the economy influences the salience of the immigration issue remains unclear. This calls for an empirical investigation of the effect of the economy on the salience of the immigration issue in Western European countries. The discussion leads to the following hypothesis, which is in line with Coffé’s argument:

H2: A prosperous economy facilitates higher salience of the immigration issue.

Further, the studies of Coffé et al. (2007) and Golder (2003) call for an investigation of a potential interaction effect between the economy and immigration. They do this from two different perspectives; Coffé et al. ground their argument in salience theory and the competition among issues, whereas Golder focuses on the perceived competition from foreigners in the job market. An interaction effect between immigration and unemployment is

highly relevant in the theoretical literature and will therefore be further investigated in the statistical analysis.

2.5 The theoretical model

The most prominent explanations of how the PRR parties have achieved electoral success have so far been presented in this theory chapter. It has been argued that issue salience theory provides valuable insight into party competition and how voters make up their minds on who to vote for. It is further argued that the salience of the immigration issue plays an important role in explaining PRR parties' success. Still, *how* this issue actually becomes salient and *whether* structural factors influence this, is not yet sufficiently explained. In the following, the causal chain of PRR party success is broken up into more closely linked relationships. A brief discussion of the methodological argument behind this is necessary.

Pierson (2003) advocates breaking up a causal chain at places where the effect between two variables is still strong. Pierson argues that "[e]ven if a chain has only three links, and the probability that each link will hold is 80 percent, there is less than a fifty-fifty chance that the entire chain will operate" (2003: 188). The link between socio-economic factors and the electoral success of PRR parties can be seen as such a causal chain. Pierson further recommends breaking up the causal chain where the link is getting weak, and "[...] where causal connections become difficult to pin down" (2003: 188). I would argue that the structures' effect on PRR party support is one causal chain where it would be advantageous to break it up into tighter links. The long-stretched causal argument *immigration drives PRR party success* has been investigated many times, often with conflicting and unclear results as this theory chapter has shown.

Today, there exists wide consensus that the demand-side factors can explain little of the variance in the support for PRR parties. Sociostructural factors form the background, but they can not directly *cause* the electoral success of a party. The causal chain, or string of factors that have to occur, is simply too long. The parties have to take advantage of the context, and that is where the supply-side factors enter the picture. However, exactly *where* this break in the causal chain is supposed to be is unclear. It must certainly be at a stage before the casting of a vote, but at what stage? The stage where an issue becomes salient seems appropriate. The

next step for the voters is then to find out which party will *maximize their utility income*²², or in other words, give them the most of the policies they want out of their vote. Voters vote for those who can credibly give them the policies they want on the issue(s) they find important.

The study of van der Brug et al. (2005) is based on a two-step theoretical model. They argue (following Downs) that the electoral decision is a process that involves more than one step. They break up the causal chain at *electoral potential*²³, where the voter can choose between several parties. At this stage, the voter determines how attractive each party is, but has not yet made a final decision. They do this in order to measure how attractive the anti-immigrant party is *before* the competition from other parties is taken into account, thereby partly excluding some aspects of supply-side theories. The second step involves deciding for one party, and here the competition from other parties is decisive; the voter will vote for another party if it can provide a higher utility income than the anti-immigration party. I argue here that when the causal chain is broken at electoral potential, one has already allowed the voter to assign pros and cons to different parties. This entails that political, supply-side factors, have already influenced the dependent variable. For example: If the voters think it is important to restrict immigration, but they also think the PRR party is too controversial, the institutional framework will hinder it, or that the PRR party is so small that to vote for it would be a waste, then they are unlikely to *potentially* vote for that party. The *British National Party* may serve as a fitting example of a party that is a victim of such circumstances. Factors associated with the party have already played out its effect at this stage. The theoretical model for this master thesis is an attempt to exclude (control for) the supply-side factors as much as possible²⁴. The reason for doing this is that it is believed that the causal chain is weak (“less than fifty-fifty” in the words of Pierson) beyond this point. This is also in line with Druckman, Green, Kuklinski and Lupia (2006), who advocate isolating breaks in causal chains, in particular when the reigning causal claims are contested.

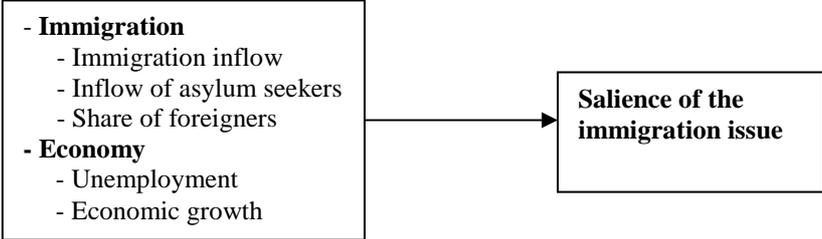
²² An economic concept that is emphasised by Downs (1957).

²³ Van der Brug et al. (2005:551) search for a measure of the attractiveness of anti-immigrant parties that was not affected by other parties' attractiveness. They ended up with the EES-question “Some people always vote for the same party. Other people make up their mind each time. Please tell me for each of the following how probable it is that you will ever vote for this party”. The inclusion of the word *ever* untangles the attractiveness of one party from the attractiveness of its competitors, in their opinion. The word *ever* lets the respondent know that this is not a one shot game, thereby leaving the possibility of voting for several parties over time open.

²⁴ One can of course never be completely certain that one has sufficiently controlled for these factors, but they should in theory make their impact at a later stage.

A structural perspective must according to Downs (1957: 140) be considered if one is to explain the distribution of ideologies among voters. Issue salience theory shows that the degree of salience of an issue is just as important as the opinions of voters. How structural factors influence the salience of the immigration issue in Western Europe needs further explanations based on empirical investigation, and that is the aim of this master thesis. The theoretical model for this master thesis is presented in Figure 4. This model also includes the indicators of immigration and the economy. These indicators will together with the measure of the dependent variable be discussed in the next chapter. Based on the discussion above, the theoretical model for this master thesis can be presented as follows:

Figure 4 - The theoretical model



3. Data and operationalisation

This chapter consists of four parts. The first part presents the operationalisation of the dependent variable. Here, an important discussion of the choice of survey is presented. The second part provides an empirical description of the salience of the immigration in Western Europe. It seeks to give an impression of how important this issue is and how it relates to the salience of other issues. The attention is turned to the independent variables in part three and four. Operationalisations are handled in the third part and the fourth part provides descriptive overview of the independent variables. Furthermore, the two initial hypotheses from the theory chapter are formulated with more precision in this chapter. The new formulations are based on indicators of immigration and the state of the economy.

3.1 Operationalisation of the dependent variable: Salience of the immigration issue

3.1.1 The issue salience concept

The concept of *salience* is an established and frequently used term in political science, but it is rarely defined (Wlezien 2005: 556). Wlezien points out that *salience* “[...] originally was used by voting behaviour scholars to designate the importance individual voters attach to different issues when evaluating political candidates” (2005: 556). It is the meaning from the voting behaviour tradition that is used here. Wlezien (2005: 558) traces issue importance back to Downs (1957) where the distances on policy dimensions was a key element for explaining voting behaviour. In this regard, salience is seen as a weight that is added to an issue dimension. This weight is considered to be influential for voters’ choice of candidate or party in elections. Issues that are added the most weight are the ones that matter the most.

Issue salience has been used in different scholarly traditions that have focused on different actors in the political system. It has been stated in the theory chapter that the interest in issue salience here is connected to the voters’ evaluation of the salience of issues. The salience that political elites attach to issues has also received a lot of attention. The work of Budge (2001) and the Comparative Manifestos Project has focused on political parties. Here, the political

programmes of political parties have been analysed and coded as metric data²⁵. Manifesto data can reveal how much political parties emphasise different issues. Scholars of judicial politics focus on other elites; Epstein and Segal (2000) investigated the salience of cases for Supreme Court justices. Mass media have also received much attention concerning issue salience. Soroka (2003) examined how the salience of foreign affairs in mass media corresponds to salience of foreign affairs in the public. This relationship between salience in the mass media and salience in the public is also emphasised by Togeby (2004). The focus can, in other words, be on several different actors, but this master thesis follows the voter behaviour tradition and is as such concerned with the public's evaluation of the salience of political issues. This will be measured through survey data and the attention is now turned to the wording of the survey question, before a survey is chosen based on a validity discussion.

3.1.2 The wording of the question

Wlezien's (2005) article about the wording of survey questions that measure issue salience will be the basis for the following discussion. He points out that scholars who measure issue salience often rely on the "most important problem" survey question. What this wording actually entails is not obvious, something which his discussion shows. Different interpretations of the word *importance* are considered first, followed by a discussion on the implications of using the word *problem*.

Wlezien (2005: 558-559) points out three uncertainties regarding the word *importance*: Is the problem important to the respondent or to the country? Is the respondent thinking about long-term or short-term problems? Is the respondent thinking about political or non-political problems? Issue salience theory is very much political, but the respondent may not necessarily regard this as a strictly political question. The validity of the data could suffer from this ambiguity. The relevance of the other two uncertainties (personally/for the country and long-/short-term) connected to the word *importance*, is less clear. Different voters will base their voting on different perspectives, so to rule out any perspectives with a more precise question wording can seem counterproductive in this regard.

²⁵ For a critical review of the Manifesto data, see Benoit, Laver and Mikhaylov (2009).

The discussion has so far shown that is not perfectly clear what the respondents mean when they find something important. The following discussion will now be on *what* the respondent finds important; an *issue* or a *problem*. The two surveys that will be discussed later differ in this matter, so this is a methodologically important consideration. The immediate difference between the words is that *issue* does not provide any information about direction, whereas *problem* is clearly negative. This might be considered an advantage with *problem* – the researcher knows that the respondent is not satisfied with the situation on that given issue. Wlezien (2005: 559-560) labels the *problem* wording as asymmetrical because it only applies when issues are problems, but not necessarily if they are important issues. He argues that this asymmetry is definitely no advantage; an important *problem* may in his opinion “[...] have nothing at all to do with an “issue” per se” (2005: 559), although it just as well could.

According to Wlezien (2005: 559-560), the word *problem* indicates that there is a distance or a mismatch between the policies that the politicians are carrying out and the policies that the respondent wants. An issue is only considered a problem if the politicians are doing too little about it. In this regard, the mismatch can not be positive; the politicians can not overachieve in the sense that they are giving more of the policies than the respondent wishes for, simply because the respondent would not consider this a problem. If a respondent wants restrictive immigration policies, and that is exactly what the government is giving, then the respondent would not consider this an important *problem*, but it would still be an important *issue* in his or her opinion. Thus, the word problem is not a perfect match with the issue salience concept. A measure of issue salience that is based on the word problem could therefore lead to the type of mistake King, Keohane and Verba (1994: 25) warn of; to give measures a different meaning than they actually warrant. This discussion has provided insight into the different validity concerns associated with the wording of issue salience survey questions. The next part is about choosing the most appropriate survey for this master thesis.

3.1.3 Choice of survey

There are several cross-national and cross-temporal surveys that can be used to measure issue salience. The validity of the measure of the dependent variable, and the number of observations that can be attained from it, depends to a great extent on choice of survey. Thus, the discussion of choice of survey is an important methodological part of this master thesis.

Many surveys have been under consideration in the early stages of the data collection process. Most of them are not reported here, but they have generally been filtered out due to lack of either relevant questions or observation in time or space. The European Social Survey (ESS) is one alternative that was dropped. It had several interesting questions, especially concerning perceptions of immigration. The interest in this is related to the work of Bergh and Bjørklund (2009) and Sides and Citrin (2007). However, none of the questions in the ESS were direct measures of issue salience and for that reason, it had to be dropped. The following discussion on choice of survey is narrowed down to the final two surveys under consideration: European Election Studies (EES) and the Eurobarometer (EB)²⁶. There is quite a lot of variation between these two surveys when it comes to question wording, frequency of rounds and geographical extensiveness. The EES will be presented first.

The EES contains a direct measure of issue salience: “What do you think is the most important problem facing Britain today?” (European Election Studies 2009). Note that the EES uses the word *problem*. The question is open-ended and the interviewer is instructed to note down all answers, something which entails that many problems can be mentioned. The data are ordered in a descending order where the most important problem comes first. There are two variables of relevance: the most important problem (MIP) and, if the respondent mentioned more than one problem, the top five problems (MIP1-5) where the first is the most important one. The percentage values of the variables are the share of respondents who answered that either *immigration* or *minorities/integration*²⁷ was an important problem. The respondents can mention many problems, although I have only used the top five problems in order to rule out problems that are likely to have a minimal or no influence on the respondent’s voting. This means that the MIP variable as it is presented here measures those who think immigration/minorities is *the* most important problem, whereas MIP1-5 measures those who think it is a problem, but not necessarily the most important problem.

There is quite a lot of variation in the MIP and the MIP1-5 variables (Appendix A). Six out of 32 countries have zero respondents that consider *immigration* and *integration/minorities* as important problems on both the MIP and the MIP1-5 variable. The maximum score on MIP is

²⁶ The Eurobarometer data were provided by Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). Statement from NSD (my translation): (Parts of) The data that are used in this publication are gathered from NSD’s polling archive. Data are supplied by TNS Gallup AS and placed at disposal through Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD). Neither TNS Gallup AS nor NSD are responsible for the analyses of the data or the interpretations that are made here.

²⁷ Immigration has the value “75” and minorities/integration has the value “76” in the EES.

19.51 percent (the Netherlands in 1999) and 32.12 percent on MIP1-5 (Denmark in 2004). Most Western European countries are included in the EES, so the spatial coverage is considered to be good. However, there are only two EES-rounds with five years between them that include the variable²⁸, so the temporal coverage is quite poor. The EES can only provide for 32 different units when the data are aggregated (Appendix A), and this is also regarded as an important weakness. The attention will now be turned to the EB.

Turning the attention to the second survey, the first EB-survey was conducted in 1974. Since then the standard Eurobarometer survey has been carried out twice a year, thus making the EB suited for investigating factors that fluctuate over short periods of time. It is usually based on 1000 face-to-face interviews, although this number varies somewhat between countries²⁹ (European Commission 2010). The question of relevance from the EB is: “What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment” (European Commission 2007: 30). *Issue* is used here instead of *problem*. Unfortunately, the EB did not include this question before 2003. There have been 13 rounds that included the question from 2003 to 2009³⁰. There are 221³¹ country-years when these data were aggregated. This makes the EB the best survey under evaluation when it comes to providing a high number of units for the statistical analysis.

The EB measures, in contrast to the EES, the *two* most important issues, no matter how many issues the respondent finds important. This could be seen as a weakness. Wlezien (2005: 566-567) argues that the value of a specific problem is partly dependent on the importance of other problems; if the respondents in a given year are very caught up in, for example, the economic situation in the country, there is less attention to lend to the immigration issue. If the respondents’ concern with the immigration issue in reality is constant over time, but other issues are varying significantly, then this will necessarily cause changes in the values of the measure of the immigration issue, even though the importance of it is constant. However, this critique from Wlezien supposes that voters have an unlimited scope of attention for political issues and that many influential issues are not being measured; the voter can emphasise new

²⁸ The rounds that include the relevant question are European Election Studies (1999, 2004).

²⁹ 2000 in Germany, 500 in Luxembourg (dropped from the selection), 1300 in United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland) (European Commission 2010).

³⁰ Eurobarometer (2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b, 2009) have been used for this master thesis.

³¹ This number will later be reduced to 182 because East Germany, Luxembourg and Northern Ireland are dropped from the selection.

(or recurrent) political issues *without* losing attention to other issues. The discussion in the theory chapter shows that voters *prioritise* between issues, and that they only have a limited capacity for political issues. The voters' choice of party for the ballot is here conceived to be based on a few issues. If the respondent was given the opportunity to list *every* issue he or she found important, one could end up with a lot of irrelevant issues. The wording of the EB-question forces the respondent to prioritise, and this could be regarded as an advantage because only the *really* important issues are then measured. Those are, after all, the issues that are most likely to influence elections. The EES on the other hand, allows the respondent to mention many issues in a prioritised order, and that is regarded as a better solution here. The EB is fixed to two issues, whereas the EES is not fixed. That leaves the researcher using the EES data free to choose the number of problems that is found appropriate for his or her study.

In regard to Wlezien's (2005) discussion of the wording of the issue salience question in surveys, there are important differences between the EB and the EES. As pointed out above, the EES uses the term *problem* whereas the EB asks about *issue*. Wlezien's discussion indicates that the issue wording is the better choice in validity terms. The EES may not pick up on important issues where the politicians' handling is regarded as sufficient or better. The concept *issue salience*, which is the theoretical concept of relevance, is more precisely measured with *issue* than *problem*; there is a smaller conceptual error term, so to speak. King et al. advocate maximising validity "[...] by adhering to the data and not allowing unobserved or unmeasurable concepts get in the way (1994: 25)". The EB wording is regarded as very close to the concept *issue salience*, more so than the EES wording. The EES would therefore require more adhering to the data. I hence regard the wording of the EB-question as preferable so far.

Wlezien's (2005) discussion of the word *importance* is the final consideration that is taken into account here. Both the EES and the EB use this word, so there is no variation there, but they do not carry out the interviews in exact same way, and that has an influence in this regard. Wlezien's discussion showed that there are three uncertainties associated with the word *importance*. The uncertainties connected to time (important at the present or for the future) and perspective (important to respondent or to respondent's country) are handled by both the surveys under consideration. Respondents in the EES are asked what problems are important to *their country today*. Thus, it is quite clear that it is the problems that are important to the country (and not personally) at the present (and not in the future) that is asked for. Similarly,

the EB respondents are asked for important issues that *face the country at the moment*. Both the EES and the EB use questions that are specified in a manner that considerably reduces the uncertainty, and the two surveys can therefore not be separated on this consideration. However, the third uncertainty discussed by Wlezien (2005) is more relevant for the EES than the EB. This uncertainty is about the possibility that the respondent is not thinking about *political* issues. This is not a problem with the EB because it is not open-ended, in contrast to the MIP-question of the EES. The respondents are shown a list with 14 different issues, in addition to the options “don’t know” and “other”. This limits the respondents’ potential answers to political issues solely. To what extent non-political responses is a significant problem with open-ended questions is uncertain, but it is a possibility (Wlezien 2005: 558). The EB questionnaire simply does not allow for this misunderstanding. However, the EB approach does also have its drawback; the premade list of issues could influence the respondents’ answers. The categories could force them to make adjustments to what they actually think is important. This is not a problem with EES as the questions are open-ended. To sum this up, open-ended questions have both a positive (respondents answer freely) and a negative (may not be a political concern) aspect. This does therefore not separate the two surveys as the two considerations more or less rule each other out.

After now having discussed the different measures of importance of the immigration issue/problem, I argue that the EB-data are more suited than the EES-data for the analysis in this thesis. Even though the validity discussion did not lead to any clear conclusions about which survey was the most suited, the EB has an advantage because it uses the word *issue* instead of *problem*, whereas the EES question is open-ended and not restricted to just two issues. This has been considered to have both drawbacks and advantages. Nonetheless, this was not enough to clearly separate the two surveys in terms of validity. The decisive difference between the two surveys is that the EB will provide far more units than the EES for the econometric analysis. Whereas the EB provides for 221 country-years, the EES could only provide for approximately 32 country-years. This means that the EB has almost nine times as many observations of the people’s perception of the importance of immigration issue as the EES.

3.1.4 The coding of the dependent variable

The coding of the variables will be described so that the analyses in this master thesis can be replicated. King et al. (1994) argue that it is important to describe both how data are handled and how conclusions are reached with such precision that they could be replicated if someone wanted to. The previous discussion, where the EB-survey was chosen, dealt mainly with measurement validity; whether the measure captured the theoretical concept (Midtbø 2007: 25). In the following section, the re-coding of the variable is presented. Each EB data-set consists of one round, and these have to be aggregated and combined to one data-set in order to measure the cross-national and cross-temporal variation in the salience of the immigration issue.

The respondent has to choose two issues from a list of 14 issues³². Each option has one corresponding dummy-variable in the data-set. The corresponding variable would receive the value “1” if the option was chosen as one of the two most important issues. If not, it received the value “0”. Every respondent has the value “1” on two variables. In order to get the importance of the immigration issue of the country level, all of these variables have been aggregated within each round of the EB. The percentage share of respondents who claimed immigration was one of the two most important issues in that country, make up the dependent variable.

3.2 Is immigration a salient issue?

This chapter has so far shown that two surveys have been considered and that the EB was chosen as the best suited survey for this master thesis. The attention can now be turned to describing the salience of the immigration issue. In order to evaluate the relevance of immigration as a political issue, it will here be compared to other issues. In the following sections, the general development of the importance of the immigration issue and how it stands in the competition from other issues in reaching the top of the agenda is discussed.

3.2.1 Salience of the immigration issue in Western Europe

³² The issues are as follows: Crime, public transport (replaced with “energy” from Eurobarometer 661 and onwards), economic situation, rising prices/inflation, taxation, unemployment, terrorism, defence, housing, immigration, health care system, educational system, pensions and environment. They can also choose “don’t know” and “other”.

The dependent variable measures the percentage of respondents who find the immigration issue important, but it says very little about how this relates to the importance of other issues. In order to get an impression of the immigration issue's importance in comparison to all the other issues, the immigration issue has been ranked. The product of this will be referred to as the *ranked* variable. This measure will only be used for descriptive purposes. That means that there are two variants of the dependent variable: *the percentage* of the respondents who finds the immigration issue as one of the two most important issues (the variable that will be used in the analyses), and *the rank* of the immigration issue, which is only discussed in this chapter. The distributions of the two variables can be seen in Appendix B and C. The percentage variable is somewhat skewed to the right, whereas the ranked variable has a more normal distribution, although this has a minor underrepresentation of the two middlemost values.

The percentage of the respondents who mentioned immigration as an important issue ranges from one percent (Portugal in 2004) to 64 percent (Spain in 2006). Spain and the United Kingdom are by far the two countries in Western Europe where the immigration issue is the most important. These two countries have 16 of the 18 highest measured values. Portugal is the country where this is the least important issue, it has twelve of the 19 lowest values. The numbers are a bit different when it comes to the ranking of the immigration issue. Overall, the United Kingdom is the country with the highest ranking of the immigration issue (there are only four number one rankings for the immigration issue in the data-set, the United Kingdom has three of them). Spain and United Kingdom have 18 of the 20 highest rankings, so this is quite similar to the percentage measure. However, four different countries stand for the eight lowest rankings of the immigration issue. The Portuguese are in other words not alone in not being concerned with the immigration issue at several points in time.

There are indications of the ranked variable being more sensitive to the importance of other issues. If several of the other issues are of little importance, then the immigration issue might get a relatively high rank, even though there is a low share of the respondents who finds the issue important. Italy, in the first half of 2008, is one such case. Only seven percent of the Italian respondents mentioned immigration, but it was nonetheless the sixth most important issue in Italy at the time. In comparison, seven percent of both French and German respondents in the same EB-round considered immigration important, but here the issue was only ranked as number ten. Germany in the autumn of 2007 is another clear example: Six percent found it important, only one percentage lower than Italy in 2008, and the issue was

ranked as number twelve. In other words, it is possible for an issue to be quite highly ranked in one country and almost bottom-ranked in another, even though the percentage of the respondents who find it important is the same. Thus, it seems plausible that the ranked variable is less stable and more sensitive to the fluctuations of other issues than the percentage measure. This is the type of sensitivity in the data Wlezien (2005: 566-567) warned of. Although this was partly argued against earlier, strong fluctuations on the measured variable due to small or no actual changes in reality are considered unfavourable in terms of validity. This is also the reason for not using this variable in the analyses. It is only included here for descriptive purposes; it shows the importance of the immigration issue in relation to the importance of other issues, but it is considered unsuited for the analyses.

Now, the attention is turned to the question in the section's title: Is immigration a salient issue? This part will show how the importance of the immigration issue has changed between 2003 and 2009 in Western Europe. 95 percent confidence intervals are added to the figure so that it will be possible to evaluate whether the changes are significant or not. This means that the probability of the real value of the population lying within the interval around the estimate value is 95 percent (Skog 2004: 160). By presenting the confidence intervals, one can be more certain that the observed changes over time in the data stem from actual changes in the real world.

Figure 5 - The mean importance of the immigration issue in Western Europe

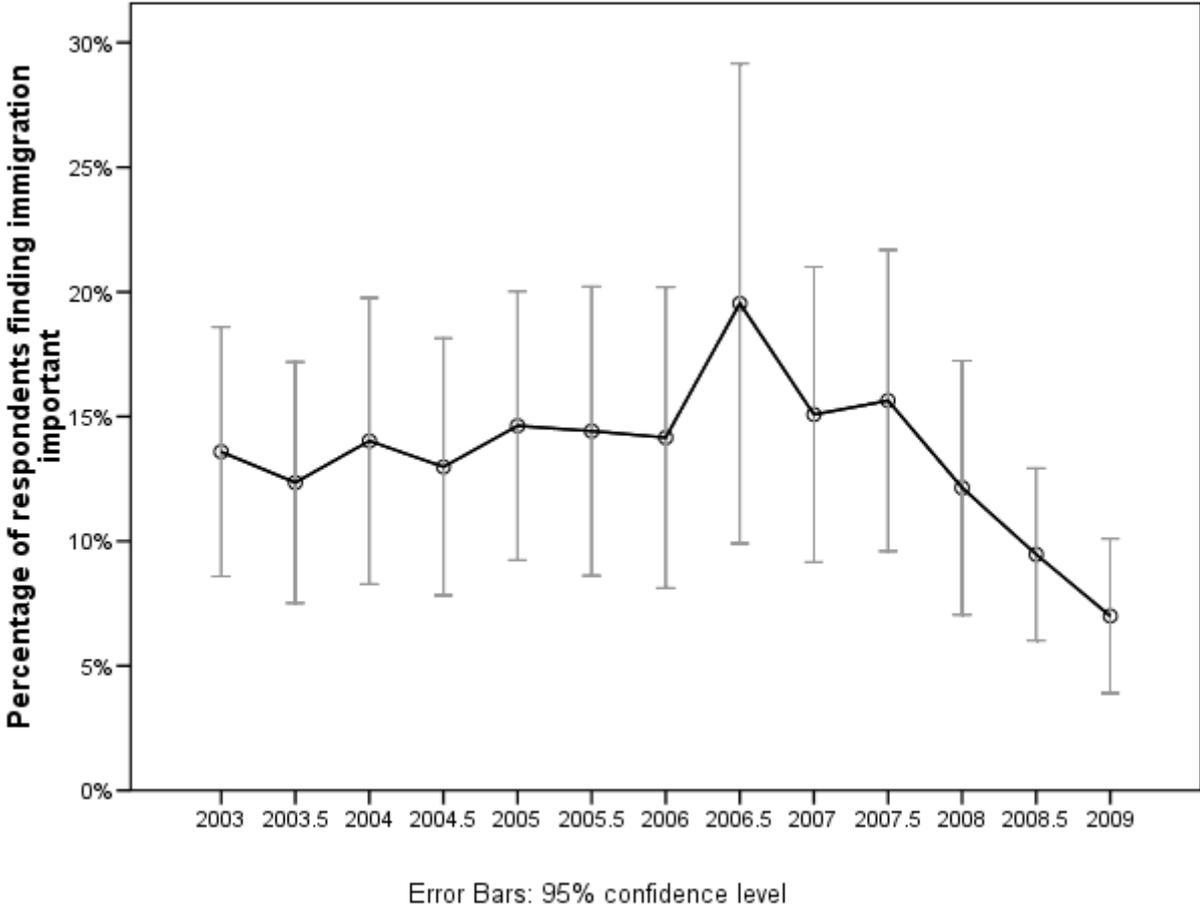


Figure 5 shows that the mean importance of the immigration issue has dropped quite a bit from the second half of 2006 to the first half of 2009. This drop in salience is *just* below the 95 percent confidence level, meaning that the mean in 2009 is significantly lower than in the second half of 2006. The mean seems to be quite stable in general at a level of twelve to 16 percent. There are two periods that deviate from this stable mean: The second half of 2006, where the mean is higher than normal, and the periods from the first half of 2008 onwards, where the mean is lower than normal. The sudden drop in the attention to the immigration issue is likely to have been caused by the financial crisis coming to the fore, and that will be more thoroughly discussed in the statistical analysis chapter. The high mean of the first half of 2006 is mainly due do the extremely high salience of the immigration issue in Spain in that period, but that will also be handled later.

The ranking of the immigration issue is quite stable (Figure 6). The same trend of declining salience of the immigration issue can be seen here as well, but the changes are not beyond the

confidence interval. Note that the direction is changed in Figure 6 because “1” is the highest value an issue can receive on the ranked variable.

Figure 6 - The rank of the immigration issue

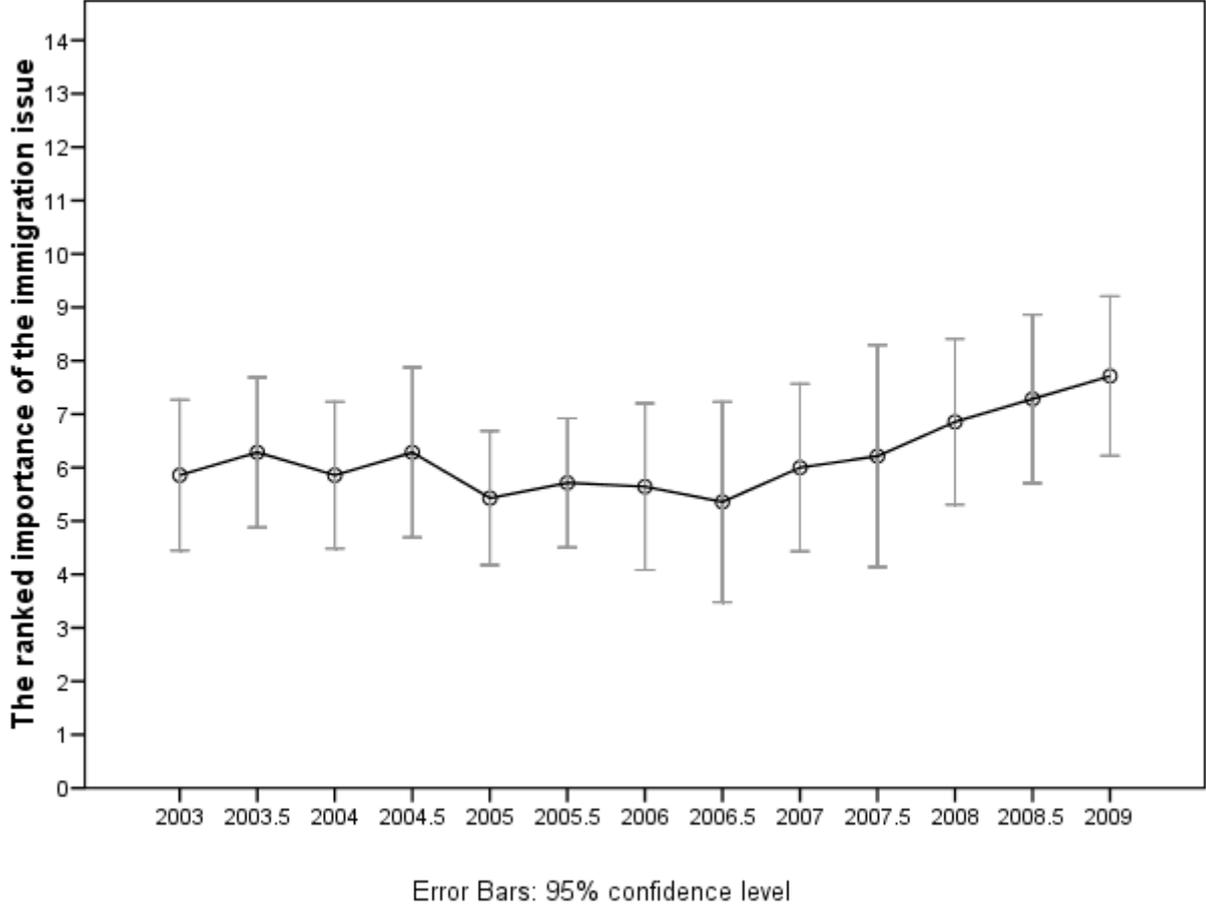


Figure 6 shows that the immigration issue is quite influential in Western European politics. It is generally among the six most important political issues in the Western European countries, although it has fallen somewhat on the agenda from the latter half of 2007. The number of issues on the aggregate (country or European) level should not be confused with the issue capacity at the individual level, which has been discussed previously in this master thesis. Even though the immigration issue is ranked as, say, the sixth most important issue in a country, it can still be the most important issue to a sizeable share of its voters. The value “1” is the highest possible ranking. The immigration issue is never close to this when the mean of all the 14 countries is measured, but it seems to be an issue that is consistently quite high up on the agenda. Therefore, the issue could regularly be an influential issue in national elections in Western Europe.

3.3 Operationalisation of the independent variables

The following sections handle the main contextual variables that may have influenced the salience of the immigration issue in Western Europe between 2003 and 2009. Whether or not people's emphasis on the immigration issue can be explained by structural factors, is unclear. Literature on PRR parties has been combined with literature on issue salience in order to formulate hypotheses about this relationship. The former handles immigration as a structural variable regularly, but it usually seeks to make inferences about electoral support for PRR parties. The latter seeks to make inferences about issue salience, but does not offer an extensive literature on the salience of the immigration issue in a Western European PRR party context. The aim of the following sections is to pursue finding the most appropriate measures of the independent variables and provide an overview of the development of these variables. Different measures of immigration are handled first, followed by a discussion of measures of the state of the economy.

What is immigration? It can take on many meanings in the literature on PRR parties. Immigrants can pose both a cultural and an economic threat, according to PRR rhetoric. Immigrants can be seen as symptoms of modernisation and globalisation. They can be seen as the defining component of an increasingly multi-cultural society. In its most general meaning, the concept "immigrant" does not distinguish between the unskilled worker from Poland, the asylum seeker from Somalia or the doctor from Canada. Immigration is here understood as a background concept (Adcock and Collier 2001). A background concept is not defined and it could through conceptualisation become one or several different *systematized concepts* (Adcock and Collier 2001: 530-531). These systematized concepts usually reflect different meanings of the background concept. The stock of foreigners in a country, the inflow of immigrants, asylum seekers or illegal immigrants are four more specific meanings of the background concept. These different meanings are likely to relate very differently to the issue salience variable, if they relate to it at all.

The handling of the immigration concept in literature on PRR parties can sometimes be regarded as imprecise. This is of course an important factor in this field, and it is probably the

most frequently used independent variable. Two specific examples where the validity of the measures of immigration can be questioned are the studies of van der Brug et al. (2005) and Swank and Betz (2003). The problem with the operationalisation in these studies is that they lay to ground the theoretical concept *losers of modernity* (Betz 1994). This social group consists of people who are afraid of loosing out to the increased competition from foreigners workers in the job market. This is the economic threat of *the other* which was discussed in the theory chapter. An increase in the number of people they consider a threat (foreign workers) would mean that the PRR party would get more votes. However, both van der Brug et al. and Swank and Betz operationalise this alleged threat in the job market as the number of asylum applications. My objection here is that the theoretical concept is not measured precisely; a narrow measure (asylum applications) is given a broader meaning (level of immigration/threat from foreign labour) than it warrants. The measurement validity can therefore be questioned. Asylum seekers and refugees are relatively detached from the labour market, but they are nonetheless chosen as measures of foreign labour in the two above-mentioned studies. This leaves the researcher open for the suspicion that accessibility or conveniences has trumped validity. This stands in contrast to for example the study of Sides and Citrin (2007: 496) who discuss four different measures of immigrant stocks in their study.

The following sections will deal with the operationalisation of these systematised concepts. Illegal immigration will not be included in this thesis as there is little reliable data on this (Jandl 2004). The operationalisation of the economic variables unemployment and economic growth will also be handled here. New hypotheses, based on the specific measures of the background concepts, are formulated in the following sections.

3.3.1 Share of foreigners

Statistics on foreigners, defined as people with a different citizenship than that of the country they reside in, is gathered from Eurostat (2010a). Eurostat uses the United Nations' (1998: 94) definition of foreign population of a country: "*All persons who have that country as country of usual residence and who are the citizens of another country*". Country of birth is another possible basis for defining foreign population (OECD 2010b: 22). The choice of criteria has influence on who the term foreigner will apply to. It is possible to be born in a country without attaining citizenship to that country if the parents are foreigners and the citizenship

laws in the country follow the principle of *jus sanguinis*, or descent (OECD 2010b)³³. Foreigners residing in such countries (Germany pre-2000 being the classical example) generally have a harder time attaining citizenship even though they have lived in the country for several years. The varying citizenship laws between countries hence influence the data as foreigners are not defined uniformly. This reduces the comparability of the data somewhat, but these data are arguably still the best there is on stocks of foreigners for this selection of countries in this period in time.

Eurostat can provide data on foreign population from 2003 to 2009, and they generally have sufficient data-coverage for all relevant country-years. The data-coverage is not satisfactory when one differentiates the foreigners by citizenship, something which would be very interesting to do. It is very likely that some foreigners are more controversial than others, depending on country of origin. The variable has to be recoded³⁴ to percentage shares so that the variable reflects the number of foreigners in relation to the size of the total population³⁵. Missing values have been interpolated by filling in the mean of the values before and after the missing value (Pennings et al. 2006: 66). The interpolation method for handling missing data is never optimal, but the composition of populations usually follows a rather predictable pattern. Scott Menard argues that employing the interpolation method is reasonable for variables that “[...] change in a well-known pattern over time” (2002: 41), which is believed to be the case here. Sudden drops or rises in the shares of foreigners in a country are regarded as unlikely and the demographical development in general seems very smooth and gradual.

The share of foreigners is a more precise term than the background concept *immigration*. A more precise hypothesis than H1 will therefore also be formulated. The relationship in H1a will be investigated in the first analysis (chapter four).

H1a: Higher shares of foreigners increase the salience of the immigration issue.

3.3.2 Inflow of immigrants

³³ For a discussion on the nationhood principles *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*, see Brubaker (1990).

³⁴ The variable “Share of foreigners” is calculated with this formula: $(100/\text{Population}) * \text{Foreigners} = \text{Percent foreigners of total population}$.

³⁵ Data on total population is gathered from Eurostat (2010b).

Both OECD and Eurostat provide data on the inflow of immigrants. Both of them have quite good data coverage for the entire period. OECD (2010a) has only one observation of Greece (in 1998), while Eurostat has four (1998 and 2006 to 2008). Choosing the latter as the estimate for the analyses thus makes it possible to get an estimate of Greece for the entire period under observation. The interpolation method is used here as well. Immigration inflow is not as slow-moving and gradual as the share of foreigners, and that makes the interpolation method more problematic here than it was with the previous variable. There are no data on Greece from 1999 to 2005, which is a quite big gap. However, the development in Greece is pretty similar to the development in Portugal and Italy, countries that are relevant to compare with. By interpolating the Eurostat-data for Greece, I have data on all the countries in most years. A few smaller gaps in the data on other countries have been interpolated as well.

Immigration inflow is measured in absolute numbers by Eurostat. However, it is necessary to take the size of the country that is receiving the immigration into consideration. The variable has therefore been recoded so that the inflows of immigrants are measured as percentages of the total population in the receiving country. There are only yearly data available for the immigration variable. This is a problem because the data should follow the same frequency of observations as the dependent variable. I have chosen to split the yearly inflow of immigrants in half, thus making the data half yearly. The assumption here is that the inflow of immigrants is relatively evenly distributed in each half of any given year. The assumption is not too well-founded, but it seems plausible that the inflow of immigrants is not heavily skewed to any side of the summer. The potential influence of this treatment on the data will nonetheless have to be controlled for in order to prevent getting biased results. The statistical analysis will therefore be run on two data-sets; one with yearly data and one with the half-yearly data. This will reveal whether the treatment of the data has influenced the results of the analysis.

The measure *inflow of immigrants* also calls for a more specific hypothesis. This variable is included in both analyses, so the effect of it will be investigated both between and within countries. A potential interaction effect has received much attention in the literature on PRR parties. Whether the effect of inflow of immigrants on the salience of the immigration issue is modified by the unemployment rate will therefore also be investigated in the statistical analysis. The new hypothesis is as follows:

H1b: Higher inflows of immigrants increase the salience of the immigration issue.

3.3.3 Asylum applications

Reports from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are used in order to measure the inflow of asylum seekers. Three reports provide the data for all the periods under observation (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2004, 2008, 2009). There are sometimes differences in the data between overlapping reports. In such instances, I have chosen to use the data from the most recent report. The differences are anyways very small and insignificant. The data for 2008, which are only presented as quarterly and monthly figures in the reports, have been put together as half yearly totals. The variable is finally recoded into percentage share of the total population in the recipient country, as with the two former variables. According to Pippa Norris (2005:171), the data from UNHCR have reliability problems, but they are still arguably the best measure of asylum seekers available.

The share of asylum seekers variable is a more specified measure in comparison to the share of foreigners and inflow of immigrants variables. This indicator measures a particular segment within the background concept of immigrants. Because of this, I do not consider it to be one of the *main* measures of immigration. I will therefore not use this variable in the first analysis, but it is included in the statistical analysis. The new hypothesis based on this measure is as follows:

H1c: Higher inflows of asylum seekers increase the salience of the immigration issue.

3.3.4 Unemployment and economic growth

The unemployment rate is usually measured with a monthly or yearly frequency. Half yearly data are needed here, so monthly data are gathered and aggregated for every six months. The monthly data are gathered from Eurostat (2011). Eurostat uses the International Labour Organisation (1982) definition of unemployment. This definition covers all those who are without work, currently available for work or seeking work³⁶.

³⁶ For more technical and precise definitions of the components of the unemployment definition, see International Labour Organisation (1982).

As with unemployment, economic growth is usually not measured with a half yearly frequency. Quarterly growth rates from OECD (2011) are employed and recoded into half yearly data. The quarterly data are seasonally adjusted and calculated by comparing the growth rate in one quarter to the same quarter the preceding year. This means that the growth rate of a country in for example the third quarter of 2007, is calculated by comparing the gross domestic product (GDP) of the third quarter of 2007 with the GDP of the third quarter of 2006.

These two measures cover different aspects of the state of the economy. A prospering economy was hypothesised to increase the salience of the immigration in H2. Low unemployment and high economic growth are here associated with a prospering economy. The specific hypotheses for each of these measures will therefore go in opposite directions. These economic hypotheses are investigated in the second, statistical analysis. The two hypotheses regarding the state of the economy are as follows:

H2a: Higher unemployment reduces the salience of the immigration issue.

H2b: Higher economic growth increases the salience of the immigration issue.

3.4 Context: Development of the independent variables

The remainder of this chapter will provide a descriptive overview of the independent variables. The general situation in Western Europe is discussed in order to give an impression of what constitutes as normal levels, comparatively speaking, on the respective variables. This will be helpful in distinguishing international from national developments and trends. All the variables will be discussed on a Western European level. Furthermore, most variables, but not all, will be discussed on a country-level. The two most important measures of immigration, the share of foreigners and the yearly inflow of immigrants are categorised and handled thoroughly in the next chapter, so it would be superfluous to discuss their country-level variation here as well. The country-level developments are especially important for the statistical analysis, which is a fixed-effects analysis and hence analyses the within-country variation.

3.4.1 Share of foreigners in Western Europe

The lowest observed share of foreigners in this period was 2 percent (Finland, 2003). The highest value is 43 percent (Luxembourg, 2009). The maximum value is 13 percent (Ireland in 2008, with Spain in 2009 as a close second) when Luxembourg is dropped (Appendix D). Luxembourg is obviously an extreme case; its lowest share of foreigners is 38 percent. The mean percent of foreigners in all of Western Europe when Luxembourg is included is 8.62. It is 6.35 when Luxembourg is excluded. The standard deviation drops from 8.92 to 2.59 when Luxembourg is removed from the sample. Luxembourg is in addition the smallest country in the sample; its population does not exceed 500 000 in any year in the period under observation. Luxembourg appears to be an outlier that should be studied separately from the other countries and will therefore be dropped from the selection.

Figure 7 - The increasing foreign population in Western Europe

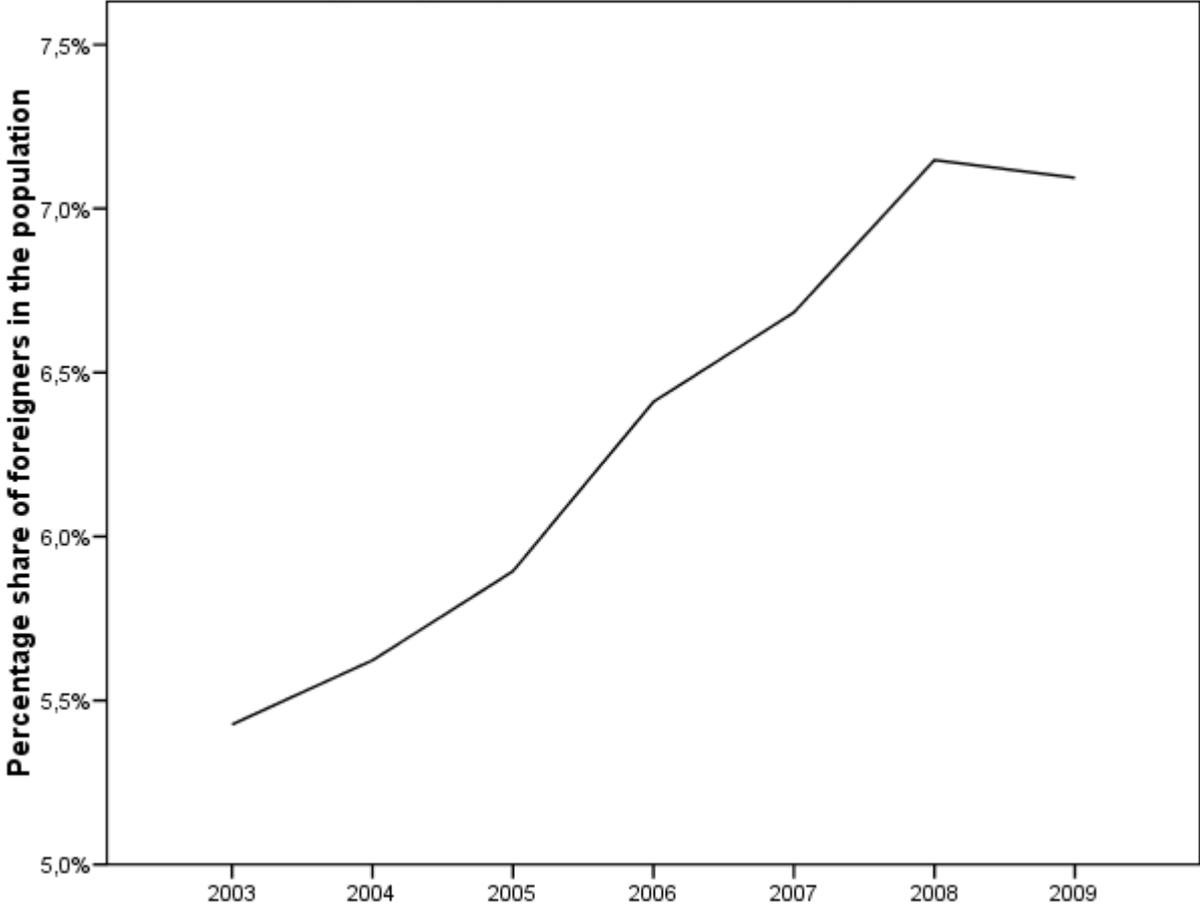


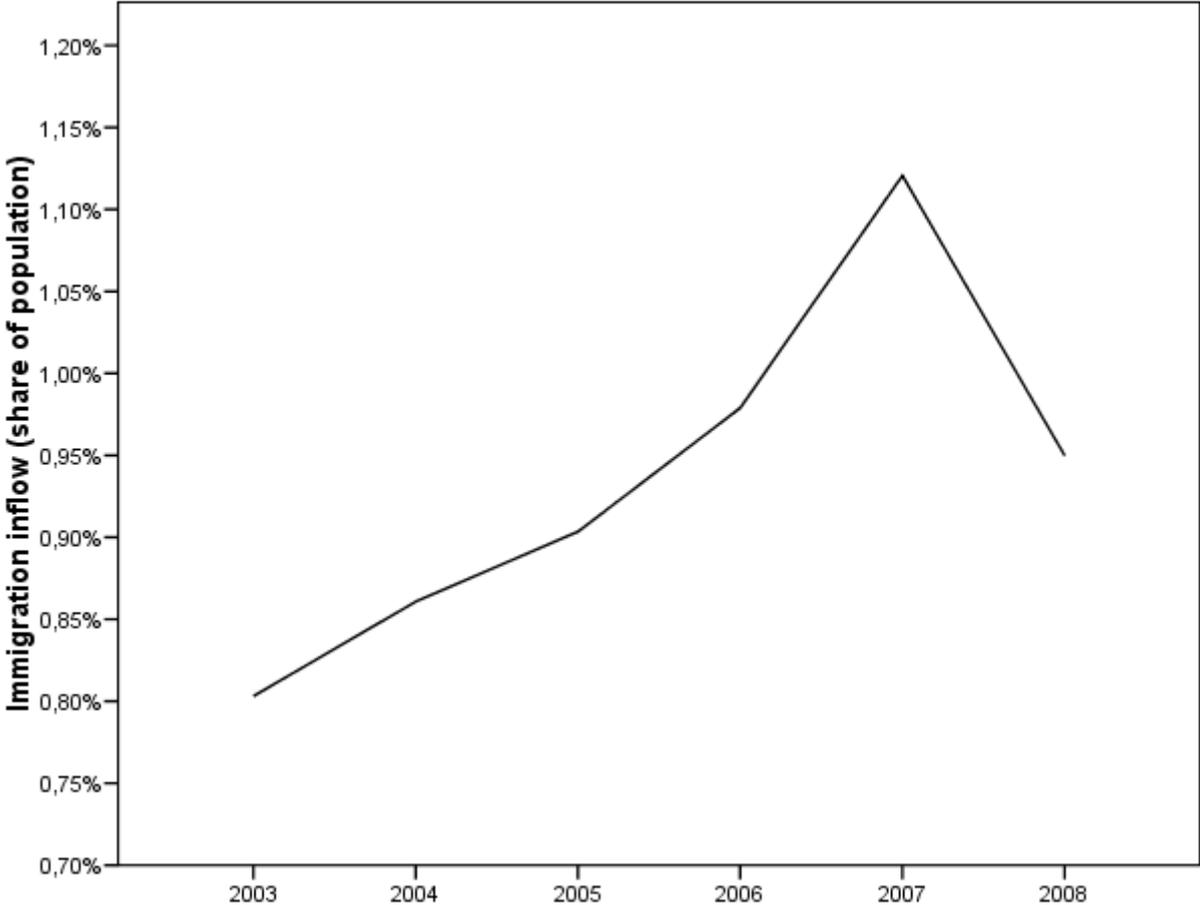
Figure 7 shows the increasing share of foreigners in 14 Western European countries between 2003 and 2009. The figures for Western Europe are the means of the 14 countries. The share of foreigners in Western Europe was 5.43 percent in 2003 and 7.15 percent in 2008 (peak

year). This is a very sharp rise of 32 percent in just five years. This implies that the observation period is quite exceptional in terms of demography. Figure 7 shows that this is an important period in Western Europe when it comes to sociostructural change.

3.4.2 Immigration inflow to Western European countries

Considering the inflow of immigrants, Portugal in 2003 is yet again the observation with the lowest value. The inflow of immigrants corresponded to 0.14 percent of the population in the country at the time. Ireland had the highest measured inflow of immigrants in 2006. It corresponded to 2.42 percent of the Irish population. Ireland and Spain have all the ten highest values on this variable. The mean for all of Western Europe in the period 2003 to 2008 is 0.93, and the standard deviation is 0.49.

Figure 8 - Increasing immigration to Western European countries

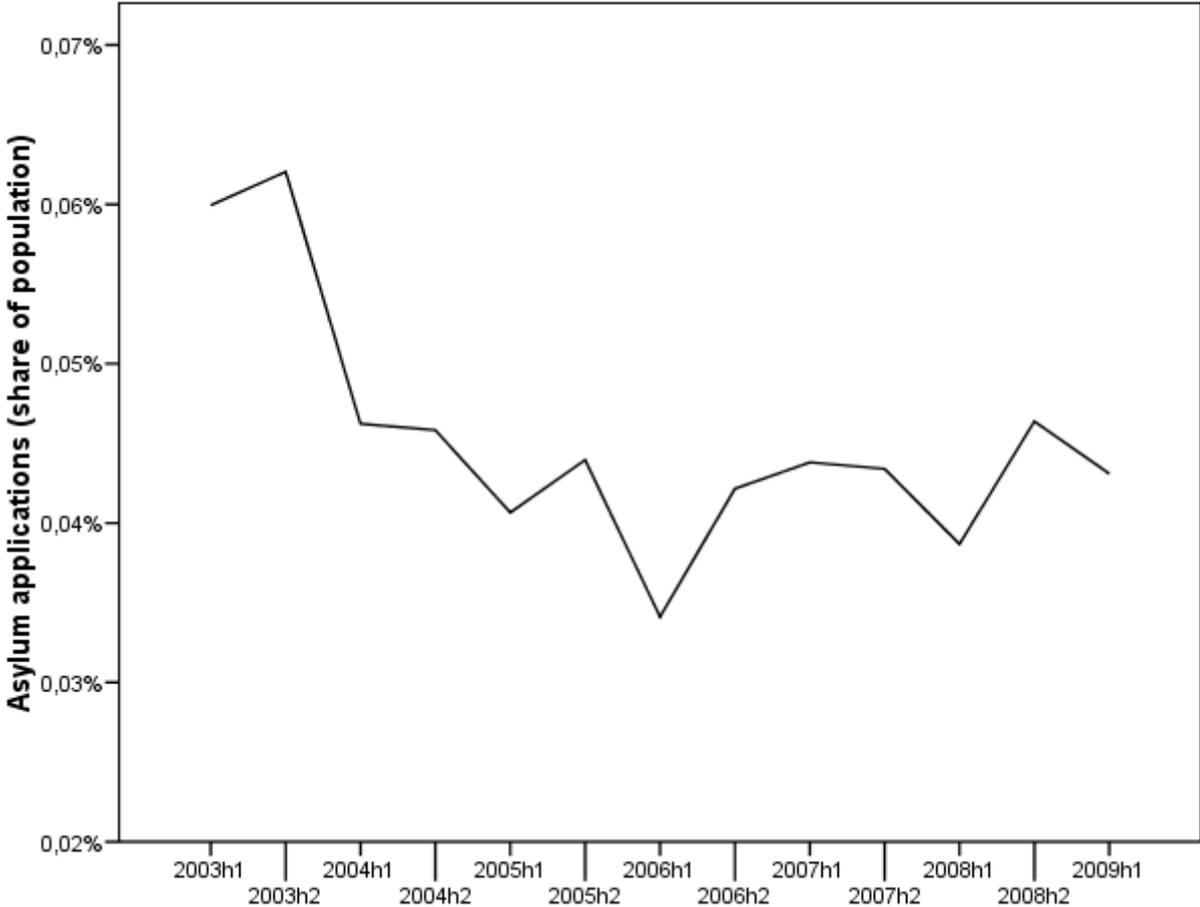


The general development in immigration inflow to Western Europe is shown in Figure 8. The mean immigration inflow in Western Europe was 0.80 percent in 2003. The inflow of immigrants rose by 40 percent between 2003 and 2007 (1.12 percent). The inflow was heavily reduced in 2008. Figure 8 shows that also this measure of immigration has changed considerably in the period under observation here.

3.4.3 Asylum applications

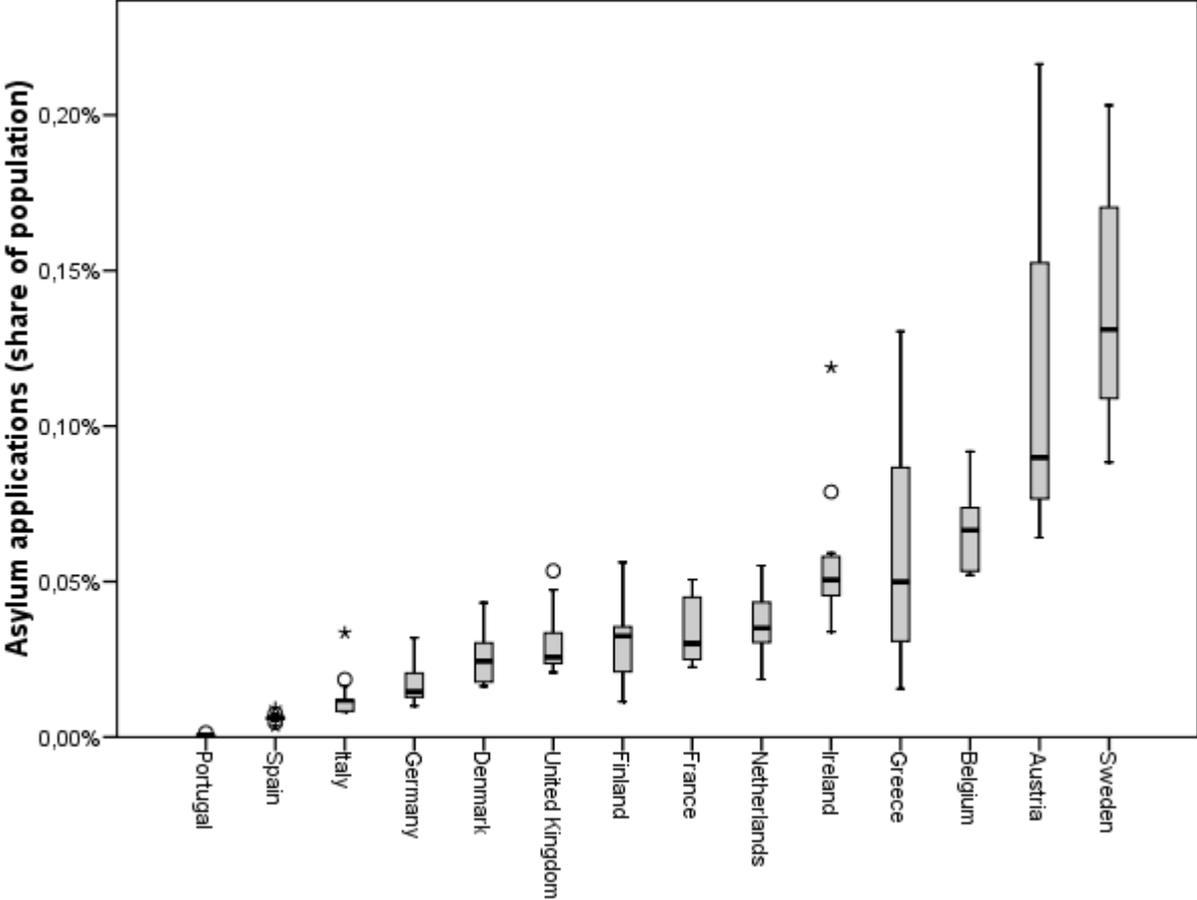
Figure 9 shows that there has been a quite strong decrease in the number of asylum applications in Western Europe from 2003 to 2006. The two first observations form a high initial peak. The subsequent trends are quite unstable, but they generally do not fluctuate far from the 0.04 percent level. The mean for the entire period is 0.045 and the standard deviation is 0.044, indicating that there is much variation between countries within this selection.

Figure 9 - Asylum application in Western Europe, weighted for population size



Portugal is once again the country with the lowest values. The country received few asylum applications throughout the entire period, and the lowest corresponds to 0.0004 percent of the Portuguese population (the three first periods). Austria and Sweden have the highest inflows of asylum seekers. Austria has the single highest value (0.216), whereas Sweden is regularly the country with the highest inflow of asylum seekers. Figure 10 shows the share of asylum applications lodged in each country in relation to the total population size. Box plots are used here instead of a line chart with separate lines for each country. Box plots provide much more oversight in instances where the lines in a multiple line chart frequently cross each other. The oversight comes at the price of not being able to *when* the values fluctuate. One can only read the variance and median value from box plots, but not the precise values by any given point in time, as one can with the line chart.

Figure 10 - Asylum applications



The thick, black line in each box in Figure 10 (often near the middle of the box), is the median score for the country. The box delimits the second and third quartile, meaning that the middle 50 percent of the observations of the country are within this box. The lines (or whiskers, as

they also are called) that stick out from the box stretch out to the minimum and maximum values. The exception from this is when the minimum or maximum value is an outlier. Outliers are marked as circles and extreme outliers are marked with asterisks above or below the boxes. Figure 10 shows that the values of most of the countries vary quite a lot in the period, Greece, Austria and Sweden in particular. Spain and Portugal receive few asylum applications throughout the entire period, whereas Ireland, Greece, Belgium, Austria and Sweden all have a median above 0.05 percent. Italy, Germany, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Finland, France and the Netherlands are considered to have medium high inflows of asylum seekers.

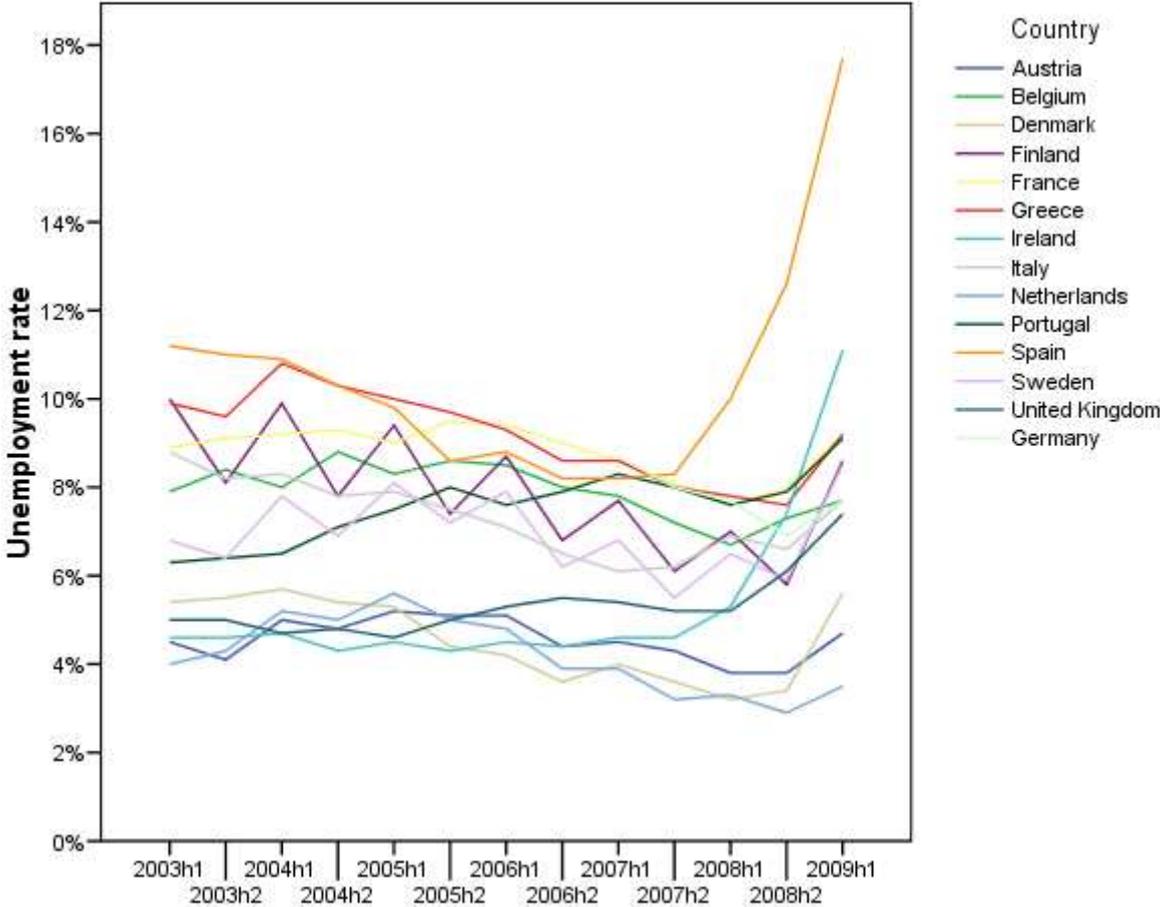
3.4.4 The state of the economy

The descriptive discussion has so far shown that Western European countries have gone through relatively rapid changes in the period under observations in regards to the compositions of the population and the inflow of both immigrants and asylum seekers. The focus will be on economic factors throughout the remainder of this chapter. The economy has been far from stable. The economic crisis made its presence felt from 2007 onwards and this is clearly illustrated by the economic indicators. The unemployment rate will be discussed first, followed by a discussion on the economic growth.

The lowest measured unemployment in this period was in the Netherlands in the second half of 2008. The unemployment rate was then only 2.90 percent. The highest measured unemployment rate, 17.70 percent, occurred in Spain in the first half of 2009. The mean is 6.96 percent and the standard deviation is 2.21 percent. The unemployment rates of all the countries seem to follow the same fluctuations. It will therefore not be necessary to present a chart of the development on a Western European level. This can be seen quite easily from the country level figure.

A multiple line chart is used in Figure 11. This can be used here because the lines do not cross very often. The development of the unemployment rate in the different countries follows the same direction most of the time. This pattern is expected from these highly intertwined and globalised economies.

Figure 11 - Unemployment in 14 Western European countries



The countries are visually hard to distinguish from each other with this type of chart. Therefore, the most important developments are commented. The most important thing to note is that even though the countries follow the same pattern, they do so at different levels. All the countries experience rising unemployment rates in the last couple of observations. Spain has the highest unemployment rate, especially from the latter half of 2007 and onwards. The Netherlands, Denmark and Austria have a comparatively low unemployment rate throughout the entire period. The rest of the countries do not stand out in any direction. These are located at a medium level. Some countries are also a bit shifty (the United Kingdom and Ireland) and move between the low and the medium level.

Figure 12 shows the development in economic growth in Western Europe between 2003 and 2009. The lowest value on the economic growth variable was -9.35 (Finland, first half of 2009). The highest economic growth was 6.52, achieved by Ireland in the first half of 2007. The mean economic growth is 1.70, and the standard deviation is 2.76. Most of the countries

experienced growth of the economy in the period before the financial crisis. The values of all the countries plummet from the latter half of 2007.

Figure 12 - Economic growth in 14 Western European countries

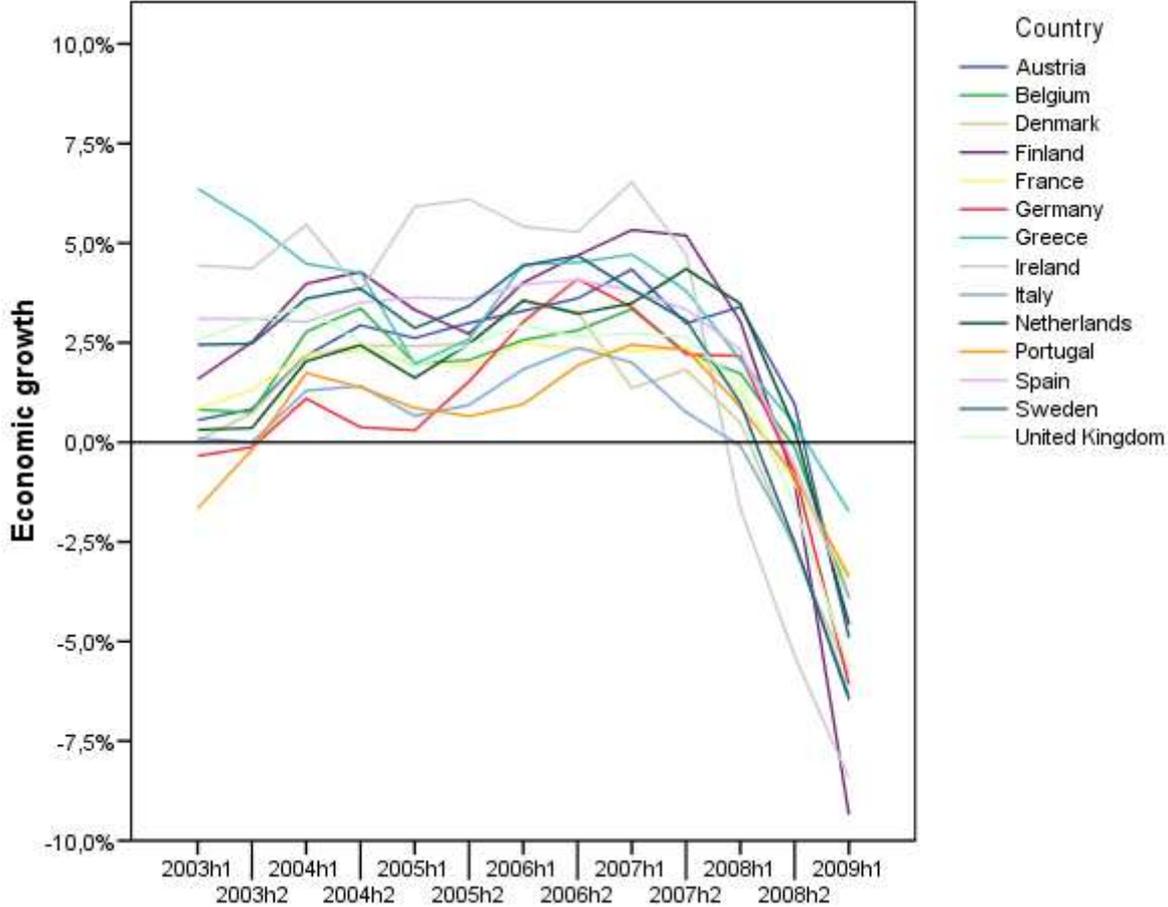


Figure 12 gives a similar impression as Figure 11 did (with opposite signs). One difference is that the countries' growth rates seem to be even more intertwined than the unemployment rates. The development in each country is so similar that there is little point in commenting each country individually. It will suffice to note that Ireland has enjoyed a remarkably high growth throughout most of the observation period, but it is also the country that has been struck hardest by the financial crisis (with the exception of Finland in the first half of 2009).

This chapter has presented the operationalisation of the different variables. It has also shown how these factors fluctuate empirically. The two next chapters will investigate the extent to which the variables described in the previous sections affect the dependent variable.

4. Comparing empirical categories

This chapter takes on a similar approach as Kitschelt and McGann (1995) of comparing countries according to their share of foreigners. The differences *between* countries are in focus here. Kitschelt and McGann (1995: 60-63) investigated the relationship between levels of electoral support for radical right parties and the percentage levels of foreigners in the population in their influential study. This approach is qualitative in nature. Following Ragin (2004), it is an attempt to uncover patterns between empirical categories. The focus is on how countries deviate and adhere to the expected pattern of a positive relationship between the two main measures of immigration and the salience of the immigration issue. Kitschelt and McGann (1995: 61) find that there is very little association between measures of immigration and electoral support for radical right parties in Western European countries. They did however find a stronger relationship between subjective evaluations of immigration (survey data) and objective measures of immigration. This is probably because subjective evaluations are closer to immigration in a causal chain than the act of voting (see theory chapter). The dependent variable in this thesis is also based on a survey question, but the question here is chosen because of its theoretical foundation in issue salience theory. Whether differences between countries in objective measures of immigration can explain differences in salience of the immigration issue is investigated in this chapter.

Previous literature has found a weak relationship or no relationship at all between different measures of immigration and PRR voting. A positive relationship, meaning that higher levels of immigration make the immigration issue more salient, is however expected here. The reason for assuming a positive relationship is that the assessment of salience should be closer to the early link of the causal chain than voting for a PRR party and hence have a stronger effect, as argued in the theory chapter. Two prominent scholars in the PRR literature, Mudde (2007: 201-231) and van der Brug et al. (2005), claim that structural factors can take us only so far, and that a lot of variation in PRR parties electoral success remains unexplained. That is why van der Brug et al. attempted to untangle the causal chain with their two-step model. They investigated societal structures' effect on the electoral *potential* of PRR parties, where peoples' inclination to possibly vote for a PRR party was measured. They found that sociostructural models explain very little. This analysis investigates whether the shortened down link, from sociostructural factors to issue salience, can produce clearer patterns. Each variable is described individually first, before they are compared and analysed.

4.1 *The dependent variable: Importance of the immigration issue*

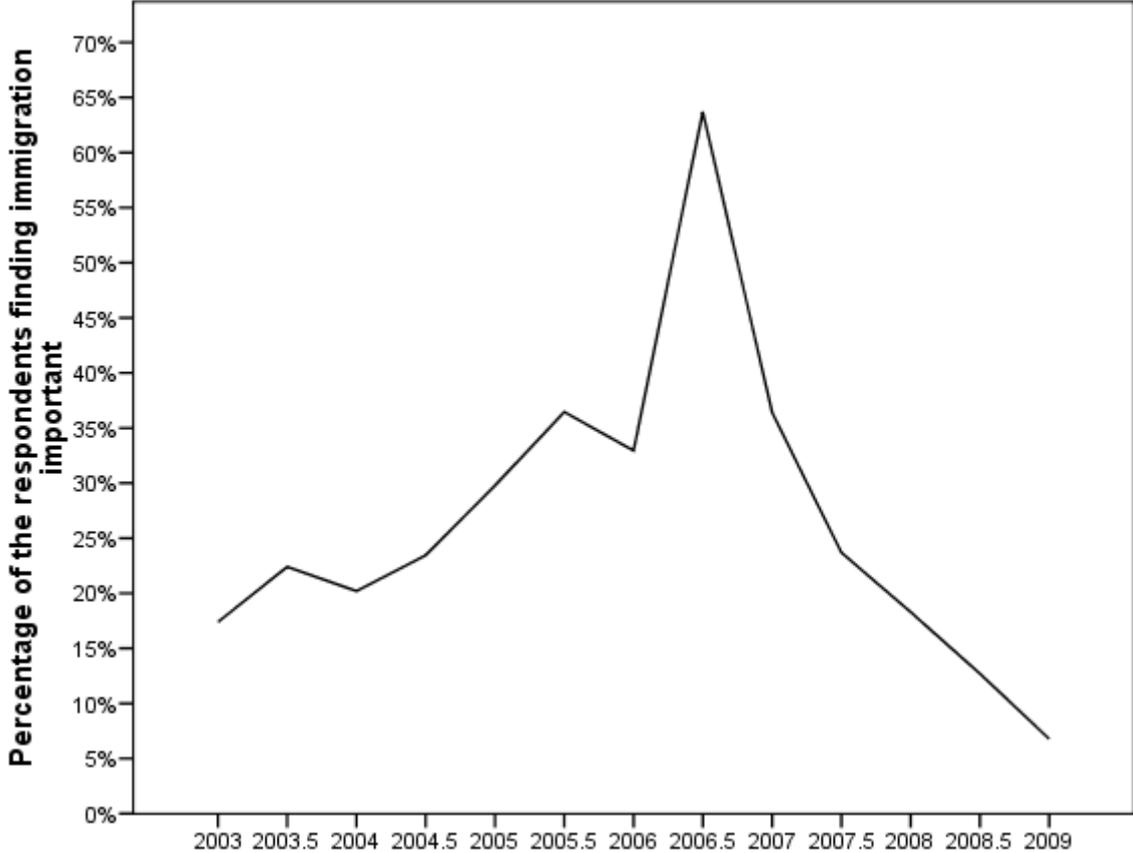
The following section is primarily empirical and will provide an overview of the dependent variable in regards to variation and differences between countries. General developments in the entire region, from 2003 to 2009, were described in the previous chapter. Thus, the attention can now be turned to the country-level. First, the levels of the salience of the immigration issue within each country are handled. The countries are then categorised according to their scores on the dependent variable in the second part.

4.1.1 Importance of the immigration issue in each country

Figure 5 in the data and operationalisation chapter showed the general trend in salience of the immigration issue in Western Europe. That graph showed that the immigration issue peaked in salience in the second half of 2006 and that the salience has dropped after that. The lowest values were observed in 2008 and 2009. It was suggested in that chapter that the peak in 2006 was due to the extreme values of Spain in that period, but this was not commented further. This section handles the variation within countries and the discussion starts with the development of the salience of the immigration issue in Spain. A discussion on the levels of immigration issue salience within all the countries will then follow.

Spain has not traditionally been a country with high immigration rates, but the country has had a bit of a boom during the last years (Worden 2010). Figure 13 shows that the salience of the immigration issue has also been high, in particular in the second half of 2006. 64 percent of the respondents from Spain stated that immigration was one of the two most important issues at that time.

Figure 13 - The importance of the immigration issue in Spain



Illegal immigrants, in particular the boat refugees from Northern Africa, have been prominent in the news. The illegal immigration to Spain was estimated to be between 32 000 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2011) and 39 180 (Buschschluter 2009)³⁷ in 2006, and this could partly explain why the immigration issue is so important in this country. Figure 13 shows a high peak in the autumn of 2006, and this upswing in salience is most likely driven by the illegal immigration situation. Illegal immigration is in general so problematic to measure³⁸ that this factor will not be considered further in this master thesis.

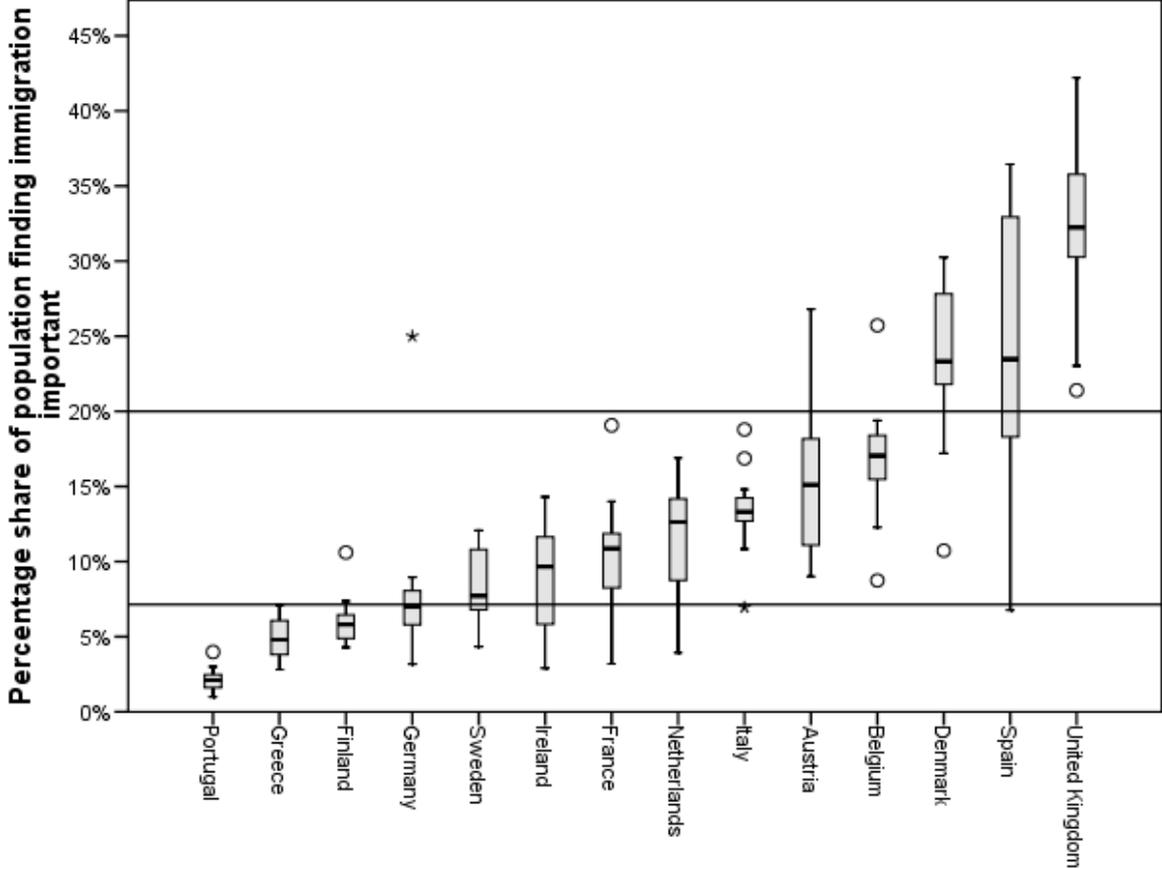
Figure 14 presents the salience of the immigration issue in each of the 14 countries from 2003 to 2009. The percentage share of respondents who think that the immigration issue is one of the two most important issues in their country forms the Y-axis. Box plots are used here, and also in following sections concerning the independent variables, in order to show the variation

³⁷ Buschschluter’s source is The Spanish Ministry of Interior.

³⁸ This is problematic to measure metrically. For a discussion on estimating both stocks and inflows of illegal immigrants, see Jandl (2004). To employ dichotomous variables is however a potential option for the statistical analysis.

within and between countries on the given variable. Box plots provide the opportunity to give an impression of the stability and representativeness of the values (Pierson 2003); whether they change a lot in the observation period or not. This reduces the risk of placing a country in “the wrong” category as a consequence of reliance on values that do not represent the typical situation, as one risks when only one observation per country is gathered (cross-sectional data).

Figure 14 - Importance of the immigration issue in 14 Western European countries



Countries with long-stretched boxes and whiskers, such as Spain, the United Kingdom and Austria, have a high degree of internal variation in the dependent variable. Countries with short boxes, such as Portugal, Finland and Italy, have less internal variation. The dots and asterisks represent outliers³⁹.

³⁹ Note that one outlier has been removed from Figure 14. That outlier was the extreme value of Spain in the second half of 2006. That observation is so far from any other score that it would stretch the Y-axis of Figure 14, making all the boxes (and whiskers) compressed and harder to read.

Two reference lines have been added on the Y-axis in Figure 14. They demarcate the borders for what is regarded as low, medium or high levels of salience. Values below 7.14 percent are considered low, values between 7.14 and 20 percent are medium, and values above 20 percent are considered high. The 7.14-limit may seem odd, but the logic behind it is based on the structure of the data; the respondents are as previously mentioned asked to state which two, from a list 14 issues, are the most important. 100 percent divided by 14 is 7.14. This limit therefore signalises when a value is above what would be expected if all the issues were equally important (or completely randomly distributed in a large population). The second reference line is set at 20 percent because there is a quite big gap between the groups of countries on each side of this limit. Hence, the limit is based on the distribution of the data.

4.1.2 Categorisation of the countries

The countries are categorised as having high, medium or low salience of the immigration issue, according to the rules set in the former section. However, one can always question why the limits are set as they are, and small alterations in the rules for setting the limits can easily change the categorisation of the countries, which in turn has a direct effect on the final results. The countries are therefore also categorised according to their stability in a category. This somewhat “softens” the limits and it creates awareness to the fact that some countries fit the categories better than others. There is for instance little difference between the median value of Sweden and Germany (Figure 14), but they nonetheless end up in different categories. Countries that have four⁴⁰ or more values outside the category it is placed in, on the basis of its median value, are considered unstable. Both Sweden and Germany fall within the “unstable” category, indicating that they do not fit perfectly into the “medium” and “low” category, respectively.

⁴⁰ Each country is observed at 13 points in time. Four observations would therefore be almost one third of the observations of the country. Countries that are considered stable have just over three fourths of their scores within the same category as where the median is located.

Table 1 - Categorisation of the countries by importance of the immigration issue

	Stable	Unstable
High	United Kingdom	Denmark Spain
Medium	Austria Belgium France Italy Netherlands	Ireland Sweden
Low	Finland Greece Portugal	Germany

Table 1 shows that the immigration issue is highly salient in Denmark, Spain and the United Kingdom. The issue reaches medium importance in Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland and Sweden. The immigration issue is not important in Finland, Greece, Portugal and Germany.

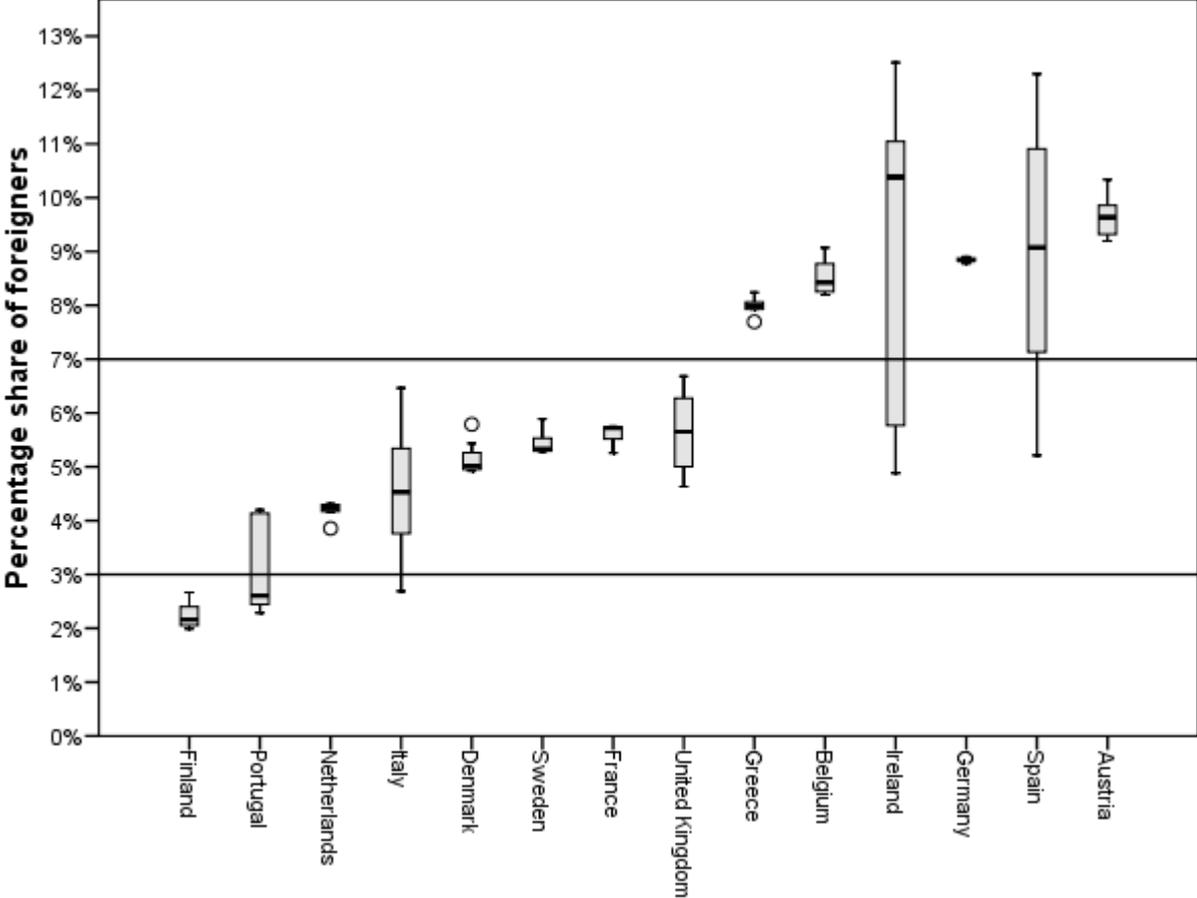
4.2 The independent variables: Two indicators of immigration

The following section concerns the two explanatory variables in this chapter: Share of foreigners in the population and immigration inflow. General trends in shares of foreigners and inflows of immigrants in Western Europe were handled in the previous chapter. The variation between and within countries are in focus here, and that will be presented first. In the second part, the countries are categorised according to their values on the variable in question. The share of foreigners is discussed first, followed by a discussion of immigration inflow.

4.2.1 Share of foreigners in each country

Figure 15 shows a box plot of the share of foreigners in each of the 14 Western European countries. One can see from the figure that some countries have contributed more than others to the rising share of foreigners on the Western European level. These are easily identifiable by their long-stretched boxes and whiskers. Ireland and Spain stand out as countries with high variation, and they have therefore affected the changes in the mean for Western Europe greatly, whereas the scores for Germany and the Netherlands are almost constant, though at different levels.

Figure 15 - Share of foreigners in 14 Western European countries



Reference lines have been added to the figure so that the limits of each category can be more easily seen. A zero to three percent share of foreigners in a country is regarded as low. Three to seven percent is regarded as a medium share, whereas shares over seven percent are seen as high. These limits are set on the basis of the distribution of the countries; the gaps between the median of Portugal and the Netherlands and the gap between the United Kingdom and Greece seem appropriate to use as limits between the respective categories.

4.2.2 Categorisation of the cases

The countries are categorised on the “share of foreigners” variable in a similar fashion to the categorisation on the dependent variable. They are still placed in the category their median is in. Because there are fewer observations per country of the “share of foreigners” variable, the number of accepted deviations from the median category should be reduced. If a country has two or more values outside the category of the median, it is considered unstable.

Table 2 - Categorisation of the countries by share of foreigners

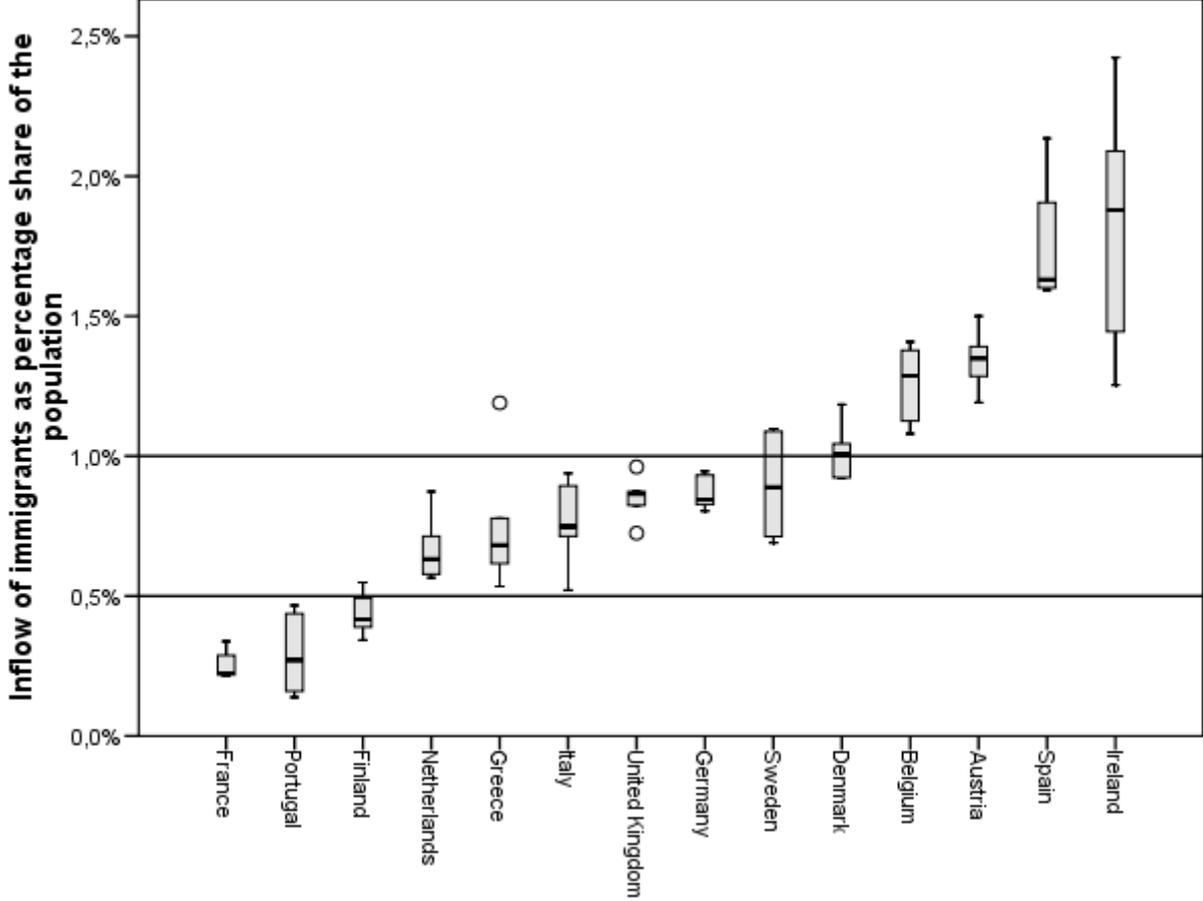
	Stable	Unstable
High	Austria Belgium Germany Greece	Ireland Spain
Medium	Denmark France Netherlands Sweden United Kingdom	Italy
Low	Finland	Portugal

Finland and Portugal are the only countries that are considered to have low shares of foreigners, although the share has been rising in Portugal during the years of this analysis. Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Italy are grouped together on a medium level. Six countries have shares of foreigners that are much higher than in the other countries, and these make up the “high share” category. This category consists of Austria, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Ireland and Spain.

4.2.3 Immigration inflow to each country

Box plots are used once again in Figure 16 in order to show the variation between and within countries. The figure shows that it is harder to create clear categories on the basis of this variable due to the even distribution of the countries.

Figure 16 - Immigration inflow to 14 Western European countries



Reference lines have been added to the Y-axis at 0.5 percent and 1 percent. There are less apparent group formations, with clear gaps between the countries, on this variable. It does however seem most natural, with the given distribution, to set the gap between Finland and the Netherlands as the limit between “low” and “medium” inflow of immigrants. The limit between “medium” and “high” is especially fluid. It seems reasonable to place the limit between Sweden and Belgium, which means that Denmark falls in between the two categories. The median of Denmark is marginally above the limit and will because of this be placed in the “high” category.

4.2.4 Categorisation of the cases

The rules in section 4.2.2 apply to this categorisation as well; countries that have two or more scores outside the category where the median is located are regarded as unstable. There is less overlapping of the countries on this variable (Figure 16) and the boxes are usually quite short. That makes them less inclined to span over two categories. There are hence only two

countries (Denmark and Sweden) that are considered unstable, as Table 3 shows. Three countries are categorised as having low inflow of immigrants. Seven countries have medium inflow, and five countries have high inflow of immigrants in the period.

Table 3 - Categorisation of the countries by inflow of immigrants

	Stable	Unstable
High	Austria Belgium Ireland Spain	Denmark
Medium	Germany Greece Italy Netherlands United Kingdom	Sweden
Low	Finland France Portugal	

4.3 Comparing the categories: Importance of the immigration issue by share of foreigners and inflow of immigrants

Categories have now been made on the dependent and the independent variables. These categories are based on differences between countries. The following section will build on this and compare the descriptive categories and discuss whether there is a relationship between them. This relationship has been examined thoroughly before, as can be seen in the theory chapter, but not to my knowledge with the salience of this issue as the explanandum. This analysis will shed light on the by far most important issue of the PRR parties and how this relates empirically to actual immigration and shares of foreigners.

4.3.1 Immigration issue importance and the share of foreigners

The dependent and the first explanatory variable make up the dimensions in Table 4.

Table 4 - Immigration issue importance and share of foreigners

Saliency of the immigration issue	Share of foreigners in the population		
	High	Medium	Low
High	Spain	Denmark United Kingdom	
Medium	Austria Belgium Ireland	France Italy Netherlands Sweden	
Low	Germany Greece		Finland Portugal

The commenting of the table will be structured after the values on the independent variable. It starts to the left of the table, with high shares of foreigners. Spain, Austria, Belgium, Ireland, Germany and Greece all have high shares of foreigners. It seems immediately quite clear that this is no guarantee for high saliency of the immigration issue. In fact, there are two countries in the low saliency cell and only one in the high saliency cell, even though the share of foreigners is high. The immigration issue has reached at least medium levels of importance in four of the six countries.

Six countries have a medium share of foreigners. The immigration issue is highly salient in Denmark and the United Kingdom. This means that the issue is slightly more important than what one might expect from the share of foreigners. France, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden all have medium values on the dependent variable and medium shares of foreigners. They do in other words fit a perfect positive pattern. There are no countries with a medium share of foreigners that have low saliency of the immigration issue.

Finally, there is the group with a low share of foreigners. This consists of only two countries: Finland and Portugal, two countries that are often excluded in the PRR literature because they often tend to be negative cases, meaning that they have traditionally had no successful PRR party. This category is arguably the most interesting in Table 4 because it shows that the immigration issue never reaches medium or high levels of saliency in this selection as long as the share of foreigners is low. There appears to be a threshold effect (Pierson 2003); at least *some* foreigners are needed for the immigration issue to become important. It is striking that the only Western European countries that can still be regarded as relatively unaffected by immigration are among the minority of countries where the immigration issue is not salient at all. Although this does not prove that there is a strong relationship, it does indicate that there is a facilitating effect of this explanatory variable: It is necessary, but not sufficient.

Table 4 shows that the majority of the countries can be found within medium/high shares of foreigners and medium/high levels of salience of the immigration issue. The countries that score high, medium or low on *both* the independent and the dependent variable can be seen as countries that fit the assumption of a positive correlation perfectly. Half of the countries follow this pattern. Five countries deviate a bit from a perfect pattern; they have either the combination medium/high or high/medium on the dependent and independent variable. This means that twelve out of 14 countries follow (with deviations no greater than one cell) the pattern of a positive relationship, whereas only two countries deviate strongly.

It appears like the share of foreigners does not directly cause the immigration issue to become important, but it seemingly provides the opportunity. A high level of foreigners is no guarantee for higher levels of salience of the immigration issue, as both Germany and Greece are examples of, and this could imply that there is no effect at all. However, the two blank cells by a low share of foreigners indicate that the immigration issue does not become important unless there is at least a medium share of foreigners. Twelve of the 14 countries follow a positive pattern to a certain extent. This indicates that higher shares of foreigners may increase the salience of the immigration issue when variation between countries is investigated.

4.3.2 Immigration issue importance and immigration inflow

The following section treats the effect of immigration inflow on the importance of the immigration issue. This is quite similar to the effect of share of foreigners in the previous section, as can be seen in Table 5. The differences between Table 4 and Table 5 will be treated first, before Table 5 is analysed separately.

Table 5 - Immigration issue importance and immigration inflow

Importance of the immigration issue	Immigration inflow		
	High	Medium	Low
High	Spain Denmark	United Kingdom	
Medium	Austria Belgium Ireland	Italy Netherlands Sweden	France
Low		Germany Greece	Finland Portugal

Table 5 resembles Table 4, but there are a few important differences. Firstly, Germany and Greece have medium levels of immigration, whereas they had a high share of foreigners. This makes the assumption of a positive correlation between the dependent and the independent variable a bit more plausible, seeing as the two cases do not deviate so strongly from the expected pattern in Table 5 as they did in Table 4. A second difference is that Denmark has moved to the left, seeing as it has high inflows of immigrants in this period. Denmark's values were marginally different from the medium category, but the placement in the high category does not affect the analysis much. The third difference between Table 4 and 5 is that France has moved to the right, meaning that the immigration issue is still at a medium level of importance, but the immigration level is low. This contradicts the temporary inference of a threshold effect from the previous section. The fact that France already has a sizable share of foreigners in the population could however partly explain this.

Seven of the countries in Table 5 follow a perfect pattern of a positive correlation between the inflow of immigrants and the dependent variable. The remaining seven countries deviate somewhat from the perfect pattern; they have either the combination medium/high or high/medium on the dependent and independent variable. No countries deviate strongly, and the fact that the bottom left and the top right cells are the only ones that are left blank indicates that there seemingly is a positive effect of the inflow of immigrants on the salience of the immigration issue.

4.4 Summary of the results

This analysis has indicated a weak positive relationship between measures of immigration and the salience of the immigration issue. The share of foreigners seems to have a threshold effect, which entails that the immigration issue is unlikely to become important unless there is at least a medium share of foreigners in the country. There does not appear to be a similar threshold effect regarding inflows of immigrants.

There are only two instances where countries have deviated by more than one cell from a perfectly correlated pattern. Germany and Greece have low levels of salience of the immigration issue, even though they have high shares of foreigners in the population. This

may indicate that the presence of a sizable share of foreigners is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the immigration issue to reach at least medium levels of salience.

This analysis indicates that there probably is a positive relationship between measures of immigration (share of foreigners/immigration) and the salience of the immigration issue. This has been investigated with bivariat comparisons of descriptive statistics with a focus on differences *between* countries. The next chapter will complement the analysis presented in this chapter in several ways. A statistical method with a focus on variation *within* countries is employed there. More sophisticated tests of the hypotheses can be performed and multivariate relationships can be investigated. By combining the two methods of analyses, more insight into the nature of the relationship between the structural factors and the salience of the immigration issue can be attained.

5. Analysing changes within countries: A statistical analysis

This chapter will first give a presentation of the statistical method and the assumptions of it. Interaction terms and the measures taken to increase robustness are also discussed before the analyses are presented. The regressions are first run without interaction effects, before an interaction term is included in the last analysis. The marginal effect of immigration on the salience of the immigration issue is here presented graphically. Finally, the results are summarised.

5.1 Method – Panel analysis

5.1.1 Why panel analysis?

Structuring the data in both time and space leads to considerable advantages for the statistical analysis in this master thesis. First and foremost, investigating whether the salience of the immigration issue in a country is affected by actual changes in the inflow of immigrants makes a time dimension an integrated part of the research question, and can as such not be ignored. A statistical analysis makes it possible to investigate multivariate relationships and add control variables to the, and will as such complement the first analysis. This method is also superior to the former in testing hypotheses.

A major advantage of pooling cross sections is the considerable increase in units (Worrall 2008: 233; Worrall and Pratt 2004: 85; Stimson 1985). In fact, a statistical analysis of these data could not be performed on the aggregate level unless the time-dimension was added, and “[...] much more refined tests of theories will become possible” (Pennings et al. 2006: 174). Heteroscedasticity⁴¹ and autocorrelation are two important concerns when working with pooled data, and this is something that must be handled because it can lead to incorrect standard errors and significance tests (Skog 2004: 257; Pennings et al. 2006: 176; Stimson 1985; Menard 2002: 64-67). The following sections will therefore also discuss the assumptions of the method, and how breaches of these are handled.

⁴¹ This does not mean that heteroscedasticity only occurs when data are pooled. Heteroscedasticity is also an important problem with cross-sectional data.

5.1.2 Why fixed effects?

There are, according to Worrall (2008), two basic methods for analysing panel data: Fixed effects (FE) and random effects (RE)⁴². The variation over time around the averages within every unit is analysed with the FE model. A consequence of this is that time-constant factors can not be included in the model because its effects would just be enmeshed in the unit-specific intercept term (Baum 2006: 221-222; Allison 2009). Because this thesis has a focus on how immigration affects the salience of immigration (both time-varying factors), it is considered a great advantage to be able to control out all time-invariant variables, and thereby investigating the “net-effect” as Torres-Reyna (2011) labels it. It is the net effect that is sought, and the FE model does an efficient job in finding this (Allison 2009: 26). Thus, it is considered the most suited estimation method here.

As mentioned above, the number of observations is significantly increased by the pooling, but the total number of observations is still quite low⁴³. Pennings, Keman and Kleinnijenhuis (2006: 176) and Menard (2002) advocate applying an ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation technique when one is dealing with a small sample size because it will produce more robust regression coefficients under these circumstances. OLS estimation therefore seems appropriate for the data in this thesis. The mean deviation method will be applied here. That means that the deviations from the mean of each country on each time-varying variable are estimated by pooled OLS (Wooldridge 2003: 461-462). The *xtreg, fe* command in STATA does this automatically (Allison 2009: 26)⁴⁴. This estimator is called the *fixed effects estimator* or the *within estimator* because it utilises the variation within each country (Wooldridge 2003: 462). Below, the equation is presented in its simplest⁴⁵ form:

$$y_{it} = \beta_1 x_{1it} + \beta_2 x_{2it} + \dots + \beta_k x_{kit} + u_{it}$$

⁴² There are others available techniques as well, but none of these are treated here. For a discussion on a hybrid method that can combine the qualities of RE and FE, and at the same time correct for several of the shortcomings of these methods, see Allison (2009).

⁴³ Roughly between 150 and 180, depending on which variables are in use.

⁴⁴ This produces the same estimates as the dummy variable method, but it is chosen because coefficients for each country are not of any particular interest here (Allison 2009: 17).

⁴⁵ This is as mentioned a simple presentation of the within transformation and the fixed effects equation. See Wooldridge (2003: 461-462), Worrall (2008) or Allison (2009) for a thorough discussion.

The unobserved time-invariant effect, α_i , is not a part of this equation because it is dropped in the *within transformation* process. Y and x are as usual the dependent and independent variables. β is the coefficient for a given independent variable and u is the error term (time variant as such, now that α_i is removed). The periods and entities are represented with t and i , respectively. When the variables used in this analysis are included in the model, the equation will be:

$$\begin{aligned} (\text{Immigration importance})_{it} = & \beta_1 (\text{Immigration})_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{Asylum seekers})_{it} + \\ & \beta_3 (\text{Unemployment})_{it} + \beta_4 (\text{Economic growth})_{it} + u_{it} \end{aligned}$$

Event dummies are also added to this model, but these are included for a practical rather than a theoretical purpose and are therefore not presented in the equation. The equation above will be slightly expanded when an interaction term is added, which is the topic for the next section.

5.1.3 Including an interaction term

There are strong arguments for including interaction terms in multivariate regression models. Both Ragin (2004) and Brambor, Clark and Golder (2006) advocate including interaction effects for methodological reasons, but there are also important theoretical reasons for investigating whether the effect of one variable on the dependent variable is modified by the effect of another. The interaction effect between immigration and unemployment has been widely discussed in the literature on electoral success for PRR parties ever since Golder's (2003) influential article. The interaction effect should at least be investigated, even though the causal model is shortened down and has issue salience as the dependent variable⁴⁶. The interaction between the two variables is believed to be influential at an early stage (the formation of opinions among voters) in the causal chain, and is thus relevant for this master thesis. Brambor et al. (2006) advocate including interaction terms whenever conditional hypotheses are of interest, and that is the case here as it is believed that the economy influences the effect of immigration on the dependent variable. The guidelines of Brambor et al. will be followed in the implementation of the interaction effect. Their checklist of dos and don'ts consists of (a) including interactions whenever you have conditional hypotheses, (b)

⁴⁶ Golder (2003) uses the vote share for populist right parties as dependent variable.

include all constitutive terms, (c) do not interpret constitutive terms by themselves, and (d) calculate meaningful marginal effects and standard errors. The last two points on the checklist have been solved by following the advice and coding of Golder (2011), as can be seen from the analysis of the interaction effect later in this chapter.

The inclusion of an interaction effect alters the equation from section 5.1.2 slightly. It now includes the interaction term *Immigration*Unemployment*:

$$\begin{aligned} (\text{Immigration importance})_{it} = & \beta_1 (\text{Immigration})_{it} + \beta_2 (\text{Unemployment})_{it} + \\ & \beta_3 (\text{Immigration*Unemployment})_{it} + \beta_4 (\text{Asylum seekers})_{it} + \beta_5 (\text{Economic growth})_{it} + u_{it} \end{aligned}$$

The constitutive terms are included with the interaction term in this equation. This may cause problems with multicollinearity. That leads the discussion over to the assumptions of the analysis.

5.1.4 Assumptions

The possible problems with heteroscedasticity and auto-correlation have already been mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. In addition to this, other problems related to the OLS estimation might arise. OLS regression preconditions that the data have certain qualities, and breaking these assumptions could lead to wrong coefficients, standard errors or significance tests (Skog 2004: 257). The following section will give an oversight of the problems met and how they are handled.

The attention will first be turned to the residuals. There are according to Skog (2004: 236) three assumptions regarding the residuals that should be taken into account: They should be homoscedastic, normally distributed and not auto-correlated. The residuals seem to be heteroscedastic because the modified Wald test⁴⁷, created by Greene (2000), turned out significant (null hypothesis of homoscedasticity). This problem can produce incorrect standard errors and significance testing. The regressions will due to this breach of the

⁴⁷ The full name of the test is “Modified Wald statistic for groupwise heteroskedasticity in fixed effect model”. The command in STATA for this test is *xttest3*.

homoscedastic residuals assumption always be run with robust variance estimates⁴⁸. Appendix E shows the distribution of the residuals from the models analysed in this chapter. The distribution is slightly right-skewed, but not so much that it is considered problematic. The last issue when it comes to the residuals is auto-correlation. The Wooldridge (2002) test for auto-correlation in panel-data models⁴⁹ is used to diagnose potential auto-correlation. The tests of the residuals from the regressions that are run later in this chapter indicate that auto-correlation is not a problem with these data. This is a bit surprising because serial correlation frequently occurs when data are pooled, but the Wooldridge test is nonetheless consistently not significant (no serial-correlation).

Worrall (2008) argues that heterogeneity, meaning some event that “shocks” the units, can cause the errors to correlate across units. An economic downturn is for example a typical source of heterogeneity. This is definitely an issue here because the financial crisis is making its presence felt in the last couple of years in this dataset. Worrall recommends modelling the shock, and this approach will be taken here. A more detailed description on how this is carried out is given in the analysis.

Other assumptions and problems related to the method are linear relationships and that the independent variables are too correlated (multicollinearity). Multicollinearity is constantly an issue when interaction terms are included in a model (Brambor et al. 2006). Multicollinearity is not considered a problem here because there is generally low correlation between the independent variables (Appendix F). The exception from this is when the interaction term (which will be highly correlated with its components) is included, but then again, this a problem with interaction models one just has to accept because all components *must* be included, according to Brambor et al. (2006). Besides, it is the marginal effect of immigration on the salience of the immigration issue that is of most interest, and not so much the significance of the model parameter, as Brambor et al. (2006: 70) point out. Linearity is as mentioned above also a central assumption for the OLS estimation. Midtbø (2007: 121) claims that linear models usually will be sufficient, but that empirical or theoretical considerations sometimes may make non-linear models preferable. The theoretical literature seems to generally assume linear relationships, and there does not seem to be empirical

⁴⁸ I have used the *robust* command in STATA.

⁴⁹ The STATA command for this test is *xtserial*.

reasons for employing non-linear models⁵⁰. Lastly, outliers can also cause problems because they have a disproportionate influence on the slope of the regression line. The models have been run with and without outliers, and this does not affect the results notably.

5.1.5 Causal inference with pooled cross sectional time series data

The dependent variable for this master thesis is as previously mentioned gathered from the EB survey. When data from surveys, such as the EB, are aggregated and used to compare differences both *between* countries, and *within* countries over time, one can say that the data has a repeated cross-sectional design (Menard 2002). With this design, one can not seek to find causal relationships over time within cohorts because the selection of cases in one wave of the survey is independent of the selection in any other year. This stands in contrast to the traditional panel design where the same cases (for example respondents) are studied in every round, and one can therefore investigate changes in each individual case over time. However, the data are here aggregated to the country-level, and it is therefore possible to seek causal relationships over time (Menard 2002: 28-30).

5.2 Concerning robustness

Three data-sets will be used for this analysis. There are two reasons for doing this: Firstly, not all variables could be observed every six months, which is the frequency of observations of the dependent variable. Half yearly data is available for most of the variables, but I have not been able to find this for the “inflow of immigrants” variable. These data are therefore partly predicted⁵¹ in order to avoid halving the number of observations. This is something that should not be taken lightly as it may cause measurement error in the independent variable, which is a more grave problem than measurement error in the dependent variable⁵² (Skog 2004: 254-256). Equivalent analyses are for this reason run on a second data-set consisting of

⁵⁰ Skog (2004: 237-246) suggests plotting the independent variables against the dependent variable in a scatter plot. Doing this does not reveal any non-linear relationships. However, Skog also claims that this procedure may not reveal non-linear relationships when the correlation is weak. I have therefore taken the logs of each separate independent variable, as suggested by Pennings et al. (2006: 157) and Skog (2004), and run the regression with these logged variables as well. They are consistently less significant than the original variables.

⁵¹ For a discussion on predicting values and treatment the problem of missing data in longitudinal research, see Menard (2002: 41-42).

⁵² Unsystematic measurement error in the dependent variable will only increase the residuals, and significant relationships may therefore be harder to find. Measurement error in the independent variable will be correlated with the error term. That is more serious because it is a breach of the assumptions of the regression analysis (Skog 2004: 254-256).

yearly data. This may reveal discrepancies between the data-sets that could stem from measurement error, and the robustness of the findings will in such instances be scrutinised.

Secondly, all the countries were struck by the financial crisis which made its presence felt from the second half of 2007 and onwards. Following Worrall (2008: 236-237), it is quite likely that the crisis has caused heterogeneity between time periods. Worrall recommends modelling in the heterogeneity with event-dummies, but not when “[...] every unit experiences the event at the same time” (2008: 246), which is likely to be the case here. Here, the financial crisis is modelled with the two continuous variables “unemployment” and “economic growth”. The main data-set includes both the period before and after the financial crisis, but the robustness of the findings from this set is tested by running parallel analyses on a data-set that ends with the first half of 2007, immediately before the financial crisis. Concurrent results between the two data-sets indicate that the effect of the financial crisis has been modelled in sufficiently with the two above-mentioned variables. Discrepancies may indicate the opposite or that the effects of the independent variables vary according to the well-being of the economy.

Summing up, the analyses in this chapter are run on one main data-set with half yearly data that span the period 2003 to the first half of 2009. Two additional data-sets, one with yearly data and one without the periods affected by the financial crisis, are utilised in addition in order to check the robustness of the findings. This robustness-testing will expose results that are only significant when the shock of the financial crisis is present (possibly due to heterogeneity) or when the predicted values on the immigration variable are included (possibly due to measurement error). By testing the results up against slightly different data-sets, the chance of committing a type I error⁵³ is reduced.

5.3 Statistical analyses

5.3.1 Descriptive statistics

This descriptive section will provide an oversight over the variables that are used in the statistical analyses. The “share of foreigners” variable, which was important in the previous

⁵³ Type I errors occurs implies rejecting a true null hypothesis, or to conclude that the alternative hypothesis is true when it is not. The opposite, type II error, occurs when a false null hypothesis is not rejected (Grønmo 2004: 327). One can say that a researcher is overly cautious when a type II error is committed.

chapter, has been dropped because it would be difficult to interpret the actual meaning of this variable in a within-analysis⁵⁴. “Economic growth” and “unemployment” measure the economic situation. The unemployment variable is arguably more interesting theoretically because it is investigated more often than economic growth in the PRR party literature. However, it does not seem to be as sensitive to the financial crisis as one perhaps would expect. Economic growth seems to capture this effect better. The correlation between the two economic variables is -.13 (Appendix F).

Table 6 - Descriptive statistics

	Variable type	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max	Obs N.
Dependent variable						
Importance of immigration (log)	Metric	2.325	.788	0	4.154	182
Independent variables						
Immigration	Metric	.463	.246	.07	1.12	168
Asylum applications	Metric	.0454	.0445	.0004	.2164	182
Unemployment	Metric	6.96	2.21	2.9	17.7	174
Economic growth	Metric	1.70	2.76	-9.35	6.52	182

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the five variables of theoretical relevance. The dependent variable has been logged for the statistical analysis⁵⁵. This variable now ranges from 0⁵⁶ to 4.154. The mean is 2.325 and the standard deviation is .788. The lowest inflow of immigrants as percentage of the recipient country’s population is .07 and the highest is 1.12. The mean and standard deviation is .463 and .246, respectively. The number of lodged asylum applications as percentage share of the recipient country’s population has a minimum value

⁵⁴ The reason for dropping the variable is that this regression analysis with fixed effects estimates utilises the within-variation of the variables. One could claim that this type of variable would work better in this type of analysis when the time series is “filtered”. Filtering implies measuring the changes in the variable from one point in time to the next, instead of measuring the absolute values. However, when one measures changes in the share of foreigners, what is one really measuring? The inflow of immigrants would definitely be an important component of the yearly changes in the share of foreigners, but this is already a variable of its own. Emigration would be an important component, as would other demographic developments such as the fertility and mortality rates and the age distribution of the native population. One could in other words not really know precisely what the variable measured, and that made it necessary to drop it from the analysis.

⁵⁵ The distribution of the dependent variable was severely right-skewed. The logged variable can be characterised as normally distributed. The initial reason for logging the variable was that it is suggested as a treatment for heteroscedasticity by Pennings et al. (2006: 161), but it did not remedy this problem. It does however seem that the logging of the dependent variable reduces auto-correlation so much that this is not a problem that has to be accounted for. It should also be noted that by taking the natural log of the variable, the interpretation of strength of the coefficients will also be altered. This entails interpreting *relative*, and not the original *absolute* changes in the dependent variable (Skog 2004: 248).

⁵⁶ Portugal in the second half of 2004 is the only observation with the value 0 on the dependent variable.

of .0004 and a maximum value of .2164. The mean is .0454 and the standard deviation is .0445. The unemployment rate ranges from 2.9 to 17.7, and the mean and standard deviation is 6.96 and 2.21. The economic growth variable ranges from -9.35 to 6.52, and has a mean of 1.70 and the standard deviation is 2.76.

Dummy variables are also used in order to control for events (Worrall 2008: 236-237, 246), but these are not presented in the table. Several events have been tested, but the riots in the French suburbs in 2005 and the extreme boat refugee situation in Spain in 2006 are the only ones that have a significant effect on the models. These are measured as dichotomous variables (0/1). Events that do not have an effect on the regression have been dropped.

5.3.2 Results of the regression

The results of the analysis are presented in Table 7. This model is pretty straight forward, consisting of the two indicators of immigration (“asylum applications” and “immigration”), two economic measures (“unemployment” and “economic growth”) and two events (“boat refugees” and “French riots”). The threshold for significant results (in bold types) is set to .05, in a two-tailed test.

Table 7 – Results from the panel analysis

	Coefficient	Robust SE⁵⁷	P-value
Immigration	.10	.21	.658
Asylum applications	-1.46	.73	.068
Unemployment	-.04	.03	.214
Economic growth	.08	.01	.000
Boat refugees	.83	.05	.000
French riots	.27	.02	.000
N = 160 R ² within = .34 Groups = 14			

Table 7 shows that neither immigration nor unemployment has a significant effect on the importance of the immigration issue. This is quite remarkable; it would be natural to assume that at least immigration would have a positive and significant effect on the salience of the immigration issue, but this does not seem to be the case. The number of asylum applications *may* have a negative and significant impact, but only at the .1-level in the main data-set, which is considered a bit too high here. All the control variables in Table 7 are positive and

⁵⁷ Concerning the robust standard errors: I used the *robust* command in Stata, but I also ran the same models with the *cluster(country)* command. The results were identical.

highly significant, meaning that they increase the salience of the immigration issue. The most interesting of these variables is economic growth because this can provide a more substantial explanation than the event-dummies. Higher economic growth increases the importance of the immigration issue, and this is highly significant. The robustness of the results in Table 7 will now be tested against the two other data-sets.

Table 8 - Checking robustness with the yearly and pre financial crisis data-sets

	Yearly data-set	Pre financial crisis data-set
R² within	.36	.22
N	83	118
Groups	14	14
Immigration	.16	.07
Asylum	-.60	-2.31*
Unemployment	-.00	-.04
Economic growth	.07**	.06
Boat refugees	.62**	.76**
French riots	.42**	.21**
Significance: ** p<.01 * p<.05		

The different data-sets produce quite similar results, but there are a couple of differences, as can be seen from Table 8. The model from the yearly data-set can explain approximately the same amount of variation in the dependent variable as the main data-set (from .34 to .36). The pre financial crisis data-set explains a lot less (.22). This means that the model performs better when extreme economic circumstances are included. Nothing is changed in regards to immigration, unemployment and the event dummies. Immigration and the unemployment rate do still not seem to have an effect on the dependent variable, whereas the event dummies still have a positive and significant effect. The asylum variable does have a negative and significant effect in the pre financial crisis data-set, but not in the data-set with yearly data. Economic growth is still positive in both the two alternative data-sets, but only at the .1-level (almost significant at the .05-level) in the pre financial crisis set. This variable does nonetheless seem to have a positive effect on the importance of the immigration issue, and the slightly reduced significance in the pre financial crisis data-set does not influence the confidence in this result much.

The results from Table 7 are all-in-all mostly strengthened by the consistent results when other data-sets are used (Table 8). The importance of the immigration issue seems to be sensitive to the state of the economy; if the economy is doing well, the immigration issue is not in so much competition in reaching the top of the respondents' issue priorities. So it may seem that it is more the absence of other heavy weighing issues that create an opening for the

immigration issue, than the immigration in itself. When the economic growth is low, the state of the economy becomes a matter of real concern for most people, and economic issues may therefore in general be regarded as more important than immigration. This relationship is investigated more closely in the next section, where an interaction term between immigration and unemployment is investigated. The interaction between immigration and unemployment is well-known in the literature on PRR parties. Whether the unemployment rate conditions the effect of immigration on the salience of the immigration issue will now be examined.

5.3.3 Regression with an interaction term

The interaction term “Immigration*Unemployment” is included in the model so that a potential modifying effect of unemployment on the effect of immigration can be revealed. The advice of Brambor et al. (2006) is followed in regards to the interpretation of the interaction term. The interaction term will be presented graphically below, and the interpretation of the term will be based on that. Table 9 can not provide much useful information about the interaction term, so the interpretation of this will have to wait for a little while. The table does however show how the other variables and the entire model are affected by the interaction term.

Table 9 - Results from the panel analysis (fixed effects), with interaction term

	Coefficient	Robust Std. Err.	P-value
Immigration	1.33	.51	.021
Unemployment	.06	.03	.117
Immigration*Unemployment	-.23	.09	.021
Asylum applications	-1.19	.94	.230
Economic growth	.07	.01	.000
Boat refugees	.73	.06	.000
French riots	.20	.02	.000
N = 160 R ² within = .37 Groups = 14			

Table 9 is quite similar to Table 7. The only difference is that the interaction term has been included in the model. First, the attention is turned to the model in general and the variables that do not constitute a part of the interaction term. The number of asylum applications had a negative and almost significant effect in Table 7. This effect is now clearly not significant (.230)⁵⁸ and the inflow of asylum applications is thus not considered here to affect the

⁵⁸ I have also run the regression without the asylum variable. This did not change the model. The effect of the other variables was unaffected by this, both in terms of direction and significance. The R² was only marginally

dependent variable. The effect of economic growth remains positive and highly significant, as do the event dummies. The effect of economic growth now seems very robust as it is significant in all three data-sets (albeit at the .1-level in the pre financial crisis data-set) and models with and without an interaction term. The R^2 has increased slightly (from .34 to .37).

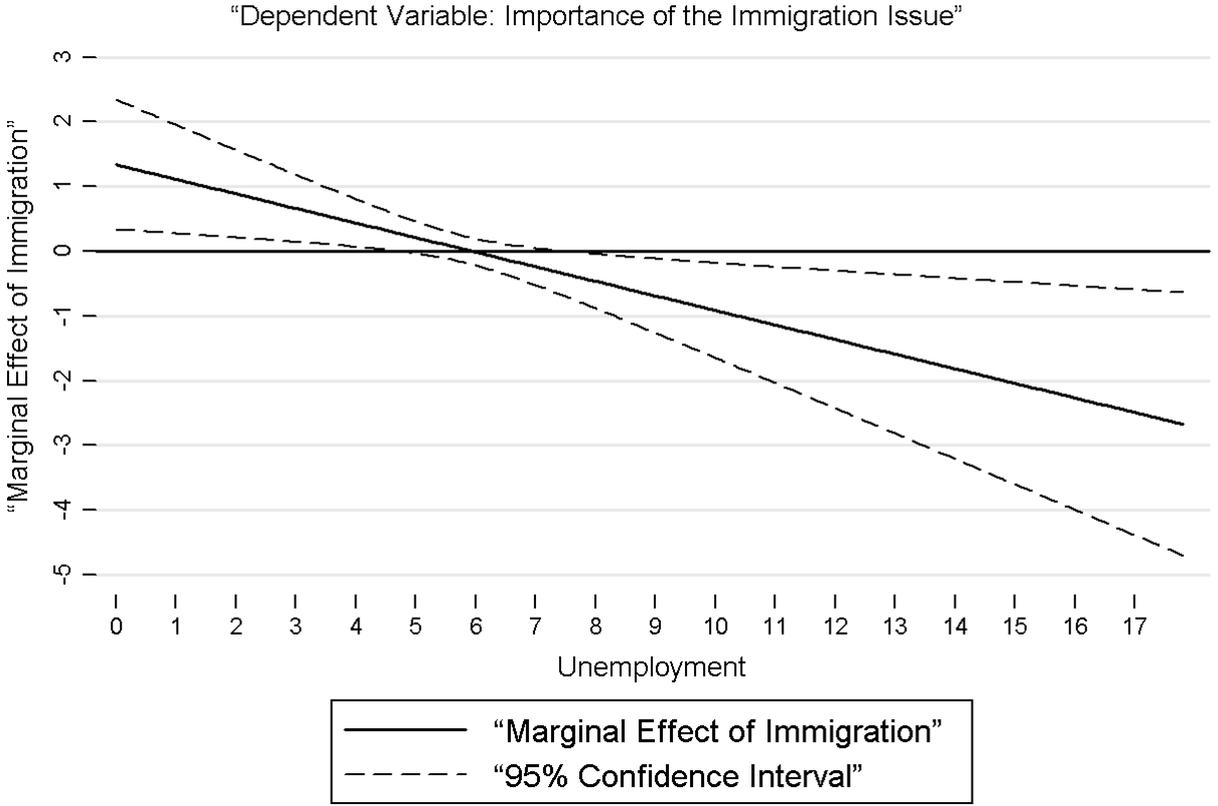
The interaction term and its components should not be interpreted individually. The significance for both “immigration” and the (negative) interaction term combined⁵⁹ is .06, but apart from that, one can say very little about the modifying effect of unemployment on the effect of immigration when the results are presented as in Table 9 (Brambor et al. 2006; Golder 2003). The relationship is presented graphically⁶⁰ (Figure 17) as this will reveal the marginal effect of immigration with corresponding confidence intervals for every relevant level of unemployment. This is vital information, because an interaction effect that is only significant at irrelevant values of the modifying variable (for example when the unemployment rate is zero) has little practical value.

reduced. The reason for letting the asylum variable remain in Table 9 is that it was almost significant in earlier analyses. It is therefore interesting to see that it is clearly not significant when the interaction term is added.

⁵⁹ The post-estimation command *test* was used to calculate the combined significance of the immigration variable and the interaction term.

⁶⁰ I have followed the instructions and guidelines of Golder (2011) for plotting the graph in Figure 17.

Figure 17- Marginal effect of immigration on the importance of immigration as unemployment changes



The dotted lines in Figure 17 demarcate the area that is within a 95 percent confidence interval. The marginal effect of immigration is significant when both the dotted lines are either above or below 0 on the Y-axis. The marginal effect is significantly positive or negative when this criterion is met. The width of the confidence interval depends partly on the number of observations; more observations give a narrower confidence interval. That is why the confidence interval is wide at very low and very high levels of unemployment.

Figure 17 reveals a relationship between the variables that justifies the inclusion of the interaction term. Immigration has a positive and significant effect on the importance of the immigration issue at rather low levels of unemployment (5 percent). The marginal effect of immigration is not separable from zero when the unemployment rate is between 5 and 7.5 percent, which can be regarded as normal levels of unemployment (6.96 being the mean). The marginal effect of immigration becomes negative when the unemployment rate is higher, above 7.5 percent to be precise. The robustness of the results will once again be tested by running the same analysis on the other two data-sets.

When the same model is run and the same interaction is plotted in an equivalent manner with the two other data-sets, the results are quite similar, but there is one important difference; the negative marginal effect of immigration when the unemployment is high is not significant (see Appendix G and H). The positive marginal effect of immigration by low to medium-low levels of unemployment remains significant. This means that the positive relationship between immigration and the importance of the immigration issue should be considered to be robust. This entails that the results are not caused by the prediction of values on the immigration variable or the financial crisis. However, the graphs in Appendix G and H do raise some doubt as to exactly at what levels of unemployment the positive effect of immigration loses significance. There is some deviation, the positive effect of immigration loses significance when the unemployment rate reaches levels somewhere between 4 to 5.25 percent. To check the practical relevance of the 4 and 5.25 percent limits, one can check which countries in the data-set this applies to. If the limit is at 4 percent unemployment, then Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands fall within. These are also countries where PRR parties have been very successful (relatively speaking). If the limit is 5.25 percent, Ireland and the United Kingdom can be added to the list. The fact that the estimates from the main data-set are based on a higher number of observations should be taken into account. Thus, the result from this set is given precedence over the other data-sets, and immigration is considered to increase the salience of the immigration issue as long as the unemployment rate is below approximately five percent.

5.4 Summary of the results

The regression analyses have shown that the economy plays an important role for the salience of the immigration issue. The issue is more prone to becoming important in countries and periods where the economy is doing well (and is hence not an important issue). The absence of problems in the economy seems to create an opening for the immigration issue to reach higher levels of salience. Economic growth has a direct effect on the salience of the immigration issue that was robust to most of the tests it was exposed to.

The inflow of asylum seekers does not seem to matter for the salience of the immigration issue. The variable is not significant most of the time, although it was significant in one of the alternative data-sets. The inflow of immigrants does not influence the importance of

immigration directly, something which might come across as a bit surprising. This is line with previous research, such as Bergh and Bjørklund (2009) and Sides and Citrin (2007), who find deviations between actual immigration and people's estimation of the actual immigration. The results from this analysis also show that the inflow of immigrants and asylum seekers do not have a similar effect on the salience of the immigration issue. The two variables behave differently in this analysis, as they should due to the fact that they cover different phenomena. This indicates that one should be very careful in using the latter as a substitute for the former. The effect of immigration seems to be conditioned by the unemployment rate. The immigration issue *does* become more important when immigration rises, but only when the unemployment rate is rather low. The positive effect of immigration loses its significance when the unemployment rate rises above approximately 5 percent. There may also be a negative effect of immigration at higher levels of unemployment, but this effect does not seem very robust.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The findings will be summed up and the hypotheses will be discussed in this final chapter. The hypotheses shed light on the research question: *To what extent does immigration influence the salience of the immigration issue, when also taking other main plausible factors into account?* The research question has been investigated in two different analyses. The first focused on the between-variation. The salience of the immigration issue was here categorised along with the two independent variables *shares of foreigners* and *immigration inflow*. The empirical categories were compared, and patterns between the dependent and the independent variables were searched for. A statistical method was employed in the second analysis which focused on the variation within countries. This method allowed for more sophisticated multivariate models where the control variables could be included and interaction terms could be tested as well. The findings from the two analyses are here combined and discussed up against the hypotheses. The arguments are then gathered into one overall conclusion. Implications and suggestions for future research are handled in the final section.

6.1 Discussing the hypotheses

The initial hypotheses (H1 and H2) from the theory chapter suggested that increased immigration and a prosperous economy would increase the salience of the immigration issue. These hypotheses were further specified in Chapter 3. A positive effect of the share of foreigners on the dependent variable was expected in H1a. This variable was not suited for within estimation, so the effect of this variable was only investigated in the first analysis. The categorisation showed that the share of foreigners seem to have a facilitating effect on the salience of the immigration issue; there has to be at least medium shares of foreigners in the country if the immigration issue is to become salient. There were no instances of countries having low shares of foreigners and medium or high values on the dependent variable. Half of the countries follow a perfect positive pattern (same value on both the independent and the dependent variable). Five countries deviate somewhat from this pattern and they neither strengthen nor weaken the hypothesis. Only two countries deviate strongly (high shares of foreigners and low salience of the immigration issue). This indicates that having a sizeable foreign population is a necessary, but not sufficient structural factor for the salience the

immigration issue to reach medium or high levels. H1a is supported to a certain extent by the empirical evidence presented in the analysis.

H1b concerned the effect of the inflow of immigrants on the salience of the immigration issue. This is the most intuitive hypothesis as it is natural to assume that immigration is the main explanatory factor for explaining variation in the importance of the immigration issue. This relationship was investigated in both analyses, meaning that both the differences in levels between countries and the variation within countries was analysed. The “inflow of immigrants” variable produced a similar pattern as the “share of foreigners” variable. However, there appeared to be a threshold effect of the “share of foreigners”. The “inflow of immigrants” variable does not seem to have the same effect. All in all, the inflow variable appeared to have a positive influence on the dependent variable. Half of the countries, yet again, fitted a perfect positive pattern, and there were no instances of strongly deviating cases. The analysis of variation between countries therefore supports H1b.

The “inflow of immigrants” variable was far from significant in the statistical analysis. The effect was also in the opposite direction of what H1b suggested. However, the effect of this variable is both significant and in the hypothesised direction when the modifying effect of unemployment is taken into account. A robust positive effect of immigration on the salience of the immigration issue is found at low levels of unemployment. At exactly what level of unemployment immigration loses its positive effect is a bit unclear because there are some differences between the estimates of the various data-sets, but this limit is always at an empirically relevant level of unemployment. The effect of immigration is not separable from zero by medium to high levels of unemployment. A negative and significant effect of immigration on the dependent variable was found by high levels of unemployment in the main data-set. This effect was however not significant when the robustness was tested with the other two data-sets. Therefore, H1b is strengthened by the results from the statistical analysis, but only at relatively low levels of unemployment. H1b is not supported at medium or high levels of unemployment. This indicates that people care about immigration to a lesser degree when the economy is a problem. Economic issues will dominate the agenda during such situations.

Another aspect of immigration, the inflow of asylum seekers, was hypothesised to have a positive effect on the salience immigration issue (H1c). The effect of this variable is negative

in the main data-set, but not significant. It was significant when the same regression was run on one of the alternative data-sets, but not on the other. The asylum variable is far from significant when the interaction term is added to the model. H1c is clearly rejected because it has the wrong sign, but there were indications of a negative effect in some of the models. A negative effect of the inflow of asylum seekers on the salience of the immigration issue can not be backed by much existing theory. It is plausible that higher inflows of asylum seekers are correlated with a more consensual debate climate on the immigration issue. Lise Tøgeby (2004) claims that campaigns of sympathy towards refugees in the media make the public opinion more positive towards this group. Any conclusion on a negative effect of asylum seekers on the salience of the immigration issue would not be sufficiently founded in existing theory. However, the negative effect is mainly not significant, so it is most likely that there is no effect at all.

The unemployment rate was hypothesised to have a negative effect on the dependent variable in H2a. This hypothesis is not supported by the statistical analyses. As assumed, the coefficients of the unemployment rate were negative, but they were also not significant in the main data-set or in the two alternative data-sets. However, the unemployment rate seems to have a conditioning effect on the effect of immigration on the salience of the immigration issue. In this regard, it is a relevant factor.

The final hypothesis (H2b) stems from issue salience theory. It is based on the assumption that the immigration issue experiences less competition from economic issues in reaching the top of the agenda when the economy is not regarded as a problem. Economic growth is therefore hypothesised to have a positive effect on the salience of the immigration issue. Economic growth is the variable in the analysis that has the clearest effect on the dependent variable. It is positive and significant in all but one⁶¹ regression. The effect is significant regardless of the inclusion of the interaction term, but most importantly, it is highly significant in the main data-set. H2b is therefore supported by the results from the analysis.

⁶¹ The pre financial crisis data-set being the exception.

6.2 Conclusions

The relationship between a society and the political system which represents it has spurred the interest which eventually led to the research question for this master thesis. The relationship between immigration and politics seems to be particularly unclear, a notion that the literature on PRR parties establishes time and time again. Explanations in the PRR literature that span all the way from the societal causes (some measure of immigration) to the final political effect (some measure of PRR party performance) turn up weak, contradicting and complicated, as Mudde (2007) points out. The demand and the supply sides are believed to work at different stages in the causal chain, where the demand is created in the society by some change or event of some sort. The political parties are the actors who supply the demand in electoral markets. The competition among parties brings in a host of new explanatory factors into the causal chain. Issue salience theory provides valuable theoretical contribution to this string of effects; it provides intervening variables that are political opinions in the rough in the sense that they have not yet been too influenced by supply side factors. They should as such, following the argument of Pierson (2003), be more closely linked to the initial cause which in this case is immigration. This thesis has investigated a shorter and more closely linked causal chain. Issue salience theory states that political parties are dependent on the salience of the issue they have attained ownership of. The immigration issue is the single-most important issue for PRR parties. It is therefore, according to issue salience theory, unlikely that the PRR party will achieve success in elections if the immigration issue is not salient during the campaign. This thesis has analysed the extent to which immigration affects the salience of the immigration issue when other plausible factors are taken into account.

The research question was analysed in two different ways. The two analyses have provided important insight on structural factors' influence on the salience of the immigration issue. The first analysis involved investigating differences between countries in the levels of the independent and dependent variables. Both the share of foreigners and the inflow of immigrants seem to have a positive effect on the salience of the immigration issue in the 14 Western European countries in the period 2003 to 2009. A potential threshold effect of the share of foreigners was also found; the immigration issue did not reach medium or high levels of salience as long as the share of foreigners was low. There were only a couple of strong deviations from the positive pattern when effect of the share of foreigners on the dependent variable was analysed. The effect of immigration inflow was a bit clearer; there were no

strong deviations from a positive relationship and half of the cases fitted the positive pattern perfectly.

The statistical analyses allowed for more sophisticated tests of the hypotheses. The attention was here turned to the variation over time within the countries. Neither of the two measures of immigration, asylum seekers and inflow of immigrants, had a significant effect on the salience of the immigration issue. However, the inclusion of an interaction effect between immigration and unemployment embellishes on this image; immigration inflow *does* increase the salience of the immigration issue as long as the unemployment is low. The effect of the unemployment rate was by itself not significant, but a significant and positive effect from economic growth was found, indicating that the immigration issue has a better opportunity of gaining salience when the economy is doing well.

6.3 Implications and suggestions for future research

The results of this master thesis builds on the findings of Coffé et al. (2007). They found that the immigration issue received more attention in economically prosperous municipalities and that this had contributed to the success of the PRR party *Vlaams Blok*. This master thesis has not drawn the argument all the way to the success of PRR, but it has generalised the findings from Coffé et al. and investigated structural factors' effect on the salience of the immigration issue in 14 Western European countries from 2003 to 2009. It finds that a thriving economy facilitates an increased salience of the immigration issue. The inflow of immigrants has a positive and significant effect at low levels of unemployment, so low that Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands were the only countries that clearly fell within the limit. This is theoretically very interesting because these countries are also characterised with having successful PRR parties. It would also be interesting to investigate the immigration issue in Norway and Switzerland too, seeing as they share many similarities with the above-mentioned in regards to economy, immigration and presence of PRR parties. The findings from this thesis are generalizable within Western Europe, and Norway and Switzerland are in this regard interesting cases.

It would also be interesting to build on the theoretical model applied here and investigate how the salience of the immigration issue affects political variables. The salience of the immigration issue has been the dependent variable in this thesis, but it would theoretically be very interesting to use it as an explanatory variable in future research regarding PRR performance. It has been combined with demand side variables here, but it should also be seen in relation to supply side explanatory models. This was beyond the scope of this master thesis, but the combination of issue salience and supply side variables is the next logical step in investigating the whole causal chain, from societal “real-world” cause to political effect.

Further research could be well-advised to draw on the theoretical model that has been used in this master thesis. To break up the causal chain at strategic joints can reveal causal relationships that otherwise get lost somewhere down the line, something which the results from the analyses indicate. The theoretical model laid to ground here should be applicable for investigating other political issues in other contexts. It is a general theoretical model and is not restricted to the PRR context.

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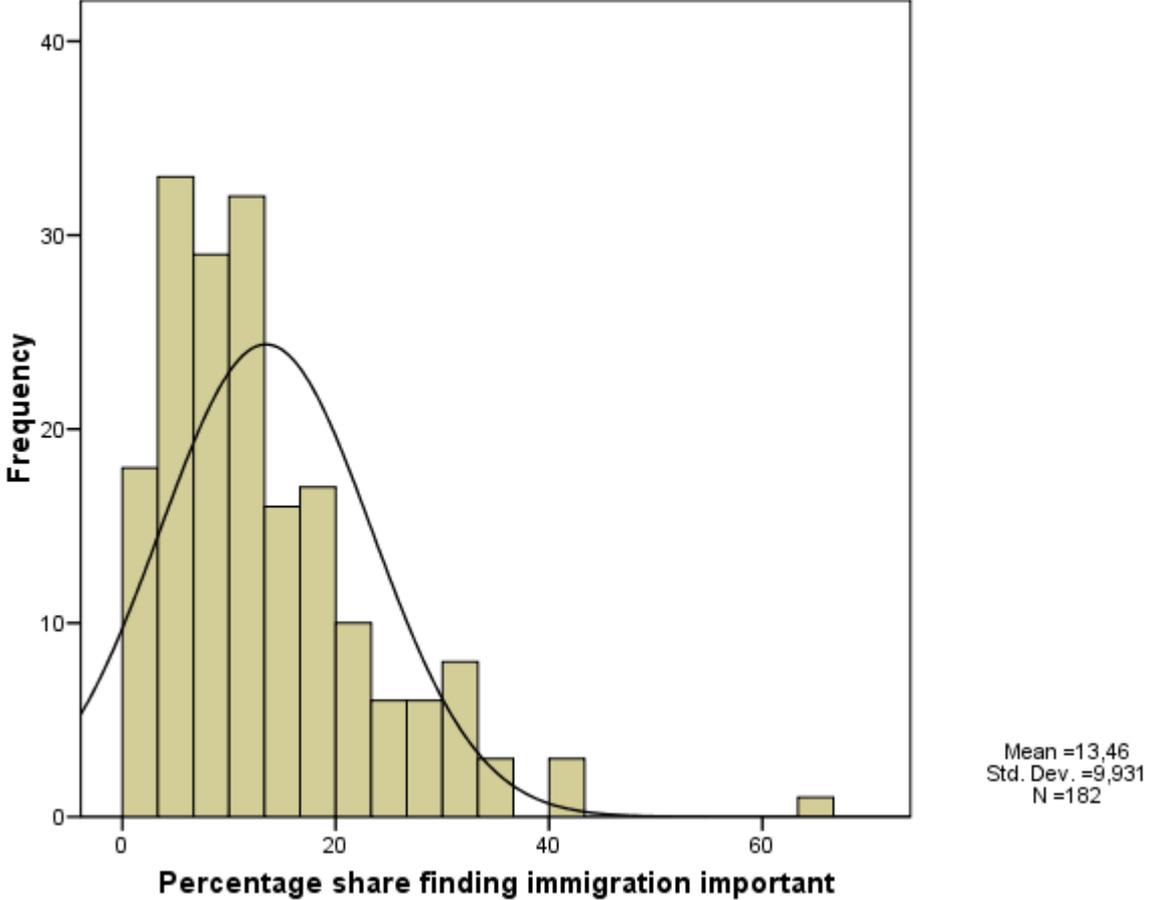
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8. Appendices

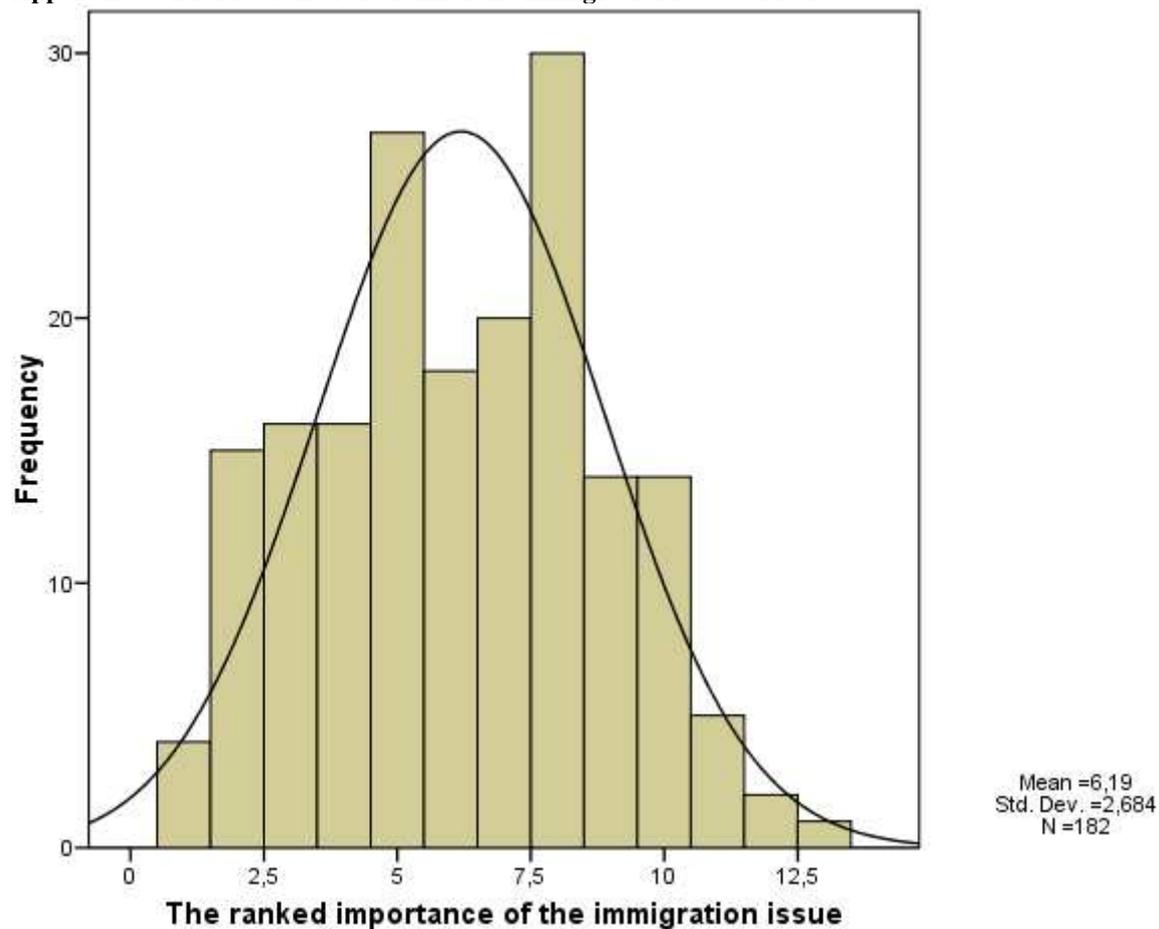
Appendix A - Importance of the immigration/integration problem (EES)

	EES_Round	Country	Percent_MIP_both	Percent_MIP_1to5_both
1	2004	Austria	,00	,00
2	2004	Belgium	10,73	30,60
3	2004	Britain	,00	,00
4	2004	Denmark	18,00	32,12
5	2004	Finland	,12	1,46
6	2004	France	,07	1,64
7	2004	Germany	,51	2,86
8	2004	Greece	1,80	4,00
9	2004	Ireland	4,51	11,13
10	2004	Italy	6,44	22,02
11	2004	Luxembourg	,00	,00
12	2004	Netherlands	,00	,00
13	2004	Northern Ireland	,00	,00
14	2004	Portugal	,00	,60
15	2004	Spain	7,04	10,35
16	2004	Sweden	1,90	8,19
17	1999	Austria	3,68	14,29
18	1999	Belgium	8,94	20,13
19	1999	Britain	2,35	5,54
20	1999	Denmark	8,68	14,52
21	1999	Finland	,00	2,42
22	1999	France	1,66	7,36
23	1999	Germany	2,95	10,85
24	1999	Greece	2,00	7,66
25	1999	Ireland	,81	4,53
26	1999	Italy	,00	8,36
27	1999	Luxembourg	5,51	10,13
28	1999	Netherlands	19,51	31,32
29	1999	Northern Ireland	,00	,00
30	1999	Portugal	,00	,80
31	1999	Spain	,75	5,30
32	1999	Sweden	,96	3,56

Appendix B - Distribution of the importance of the immigration issue variable



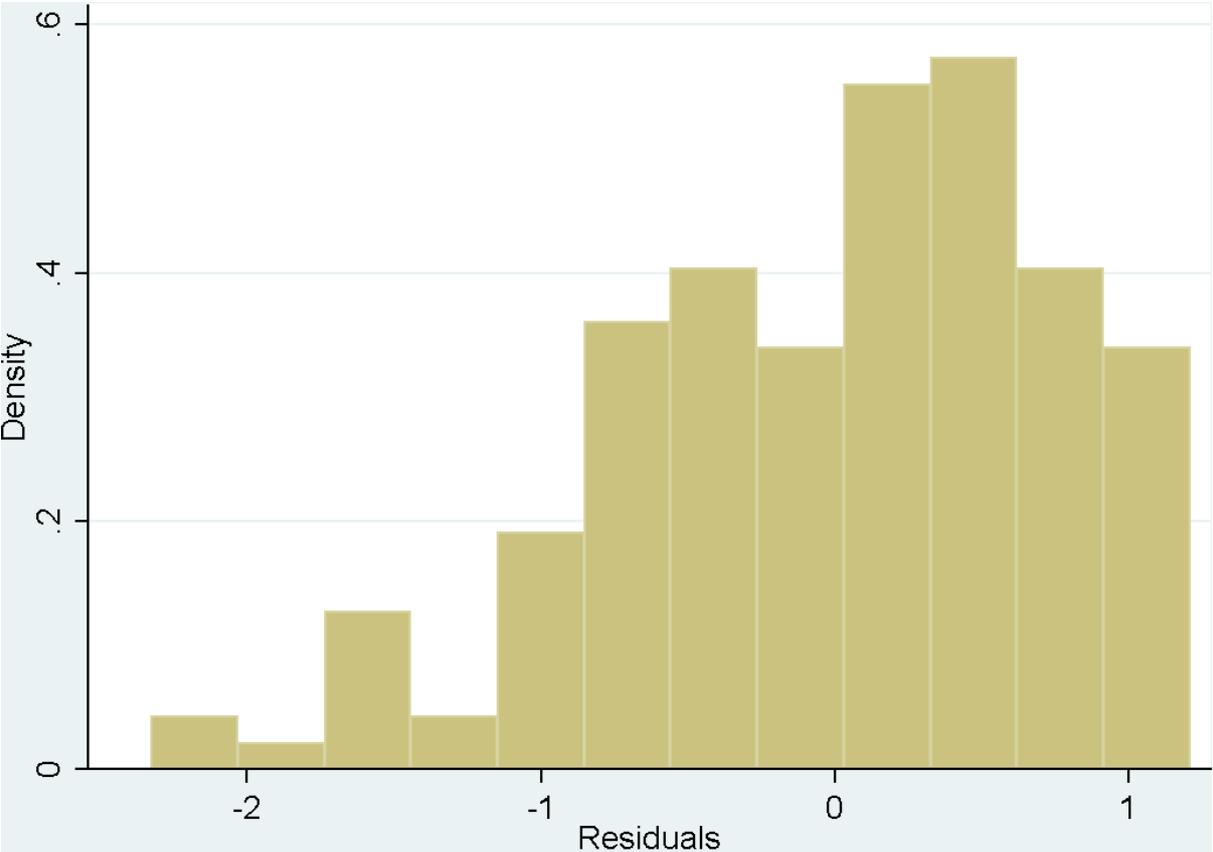
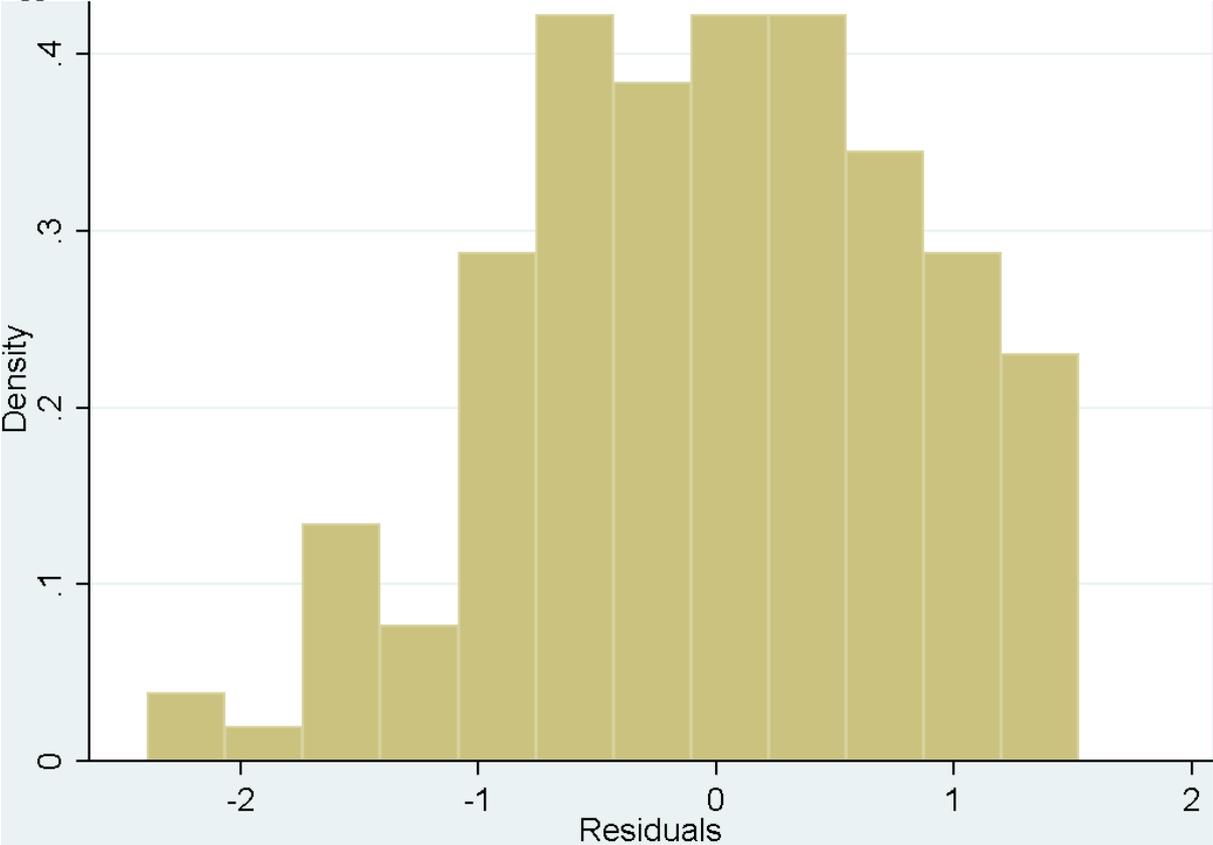
Appendix C - Distribution of the rank of the immigration issue variable



Appendix D - Share of foreigners in Western European countries

Variable	Luxembourg	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Share of foreigners	With	180	1.99	43.15	8.62	8.92
	Without	168	1.99	12.51	6.35	2.59

Appendix E - Distribution of the residuals with (above) and without (below) interaction-term



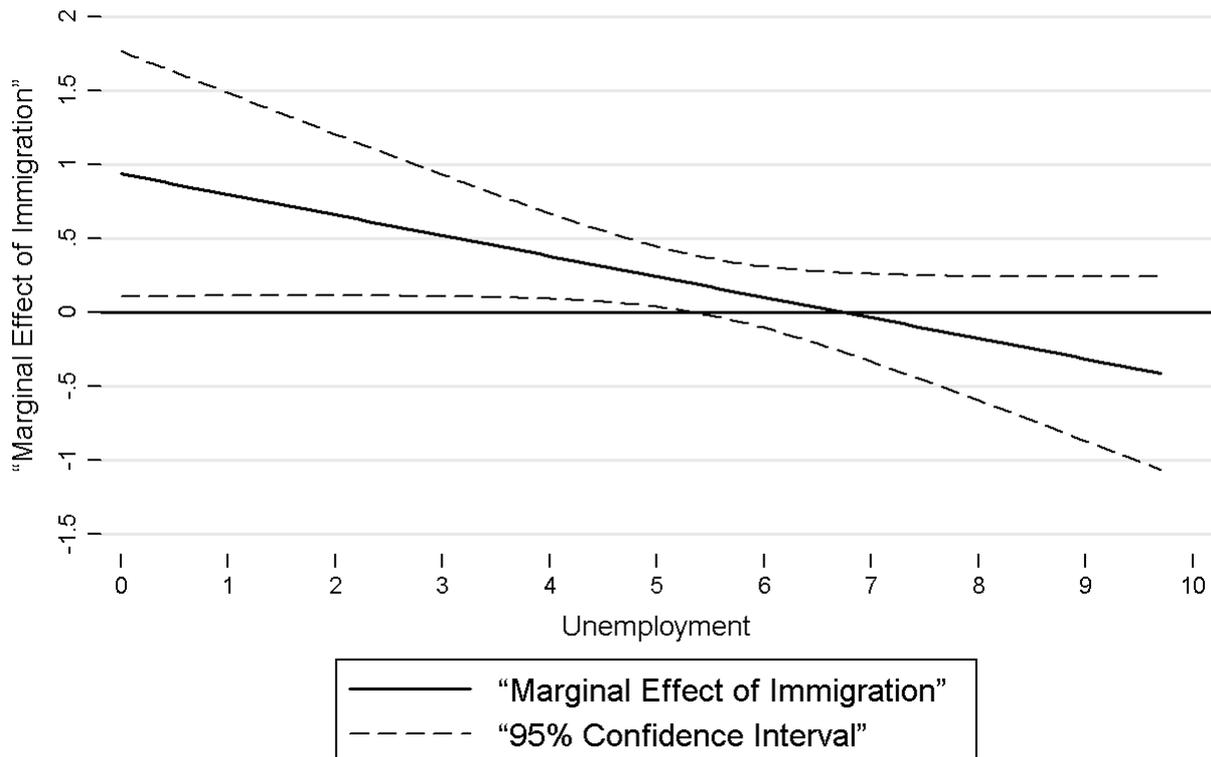
Appendix F - Testing for multicollinearity, bivariat correlations
Correlations

		IMMIGRATION_ _PERCENT	ASYLUM_ PERCENT	UNEMPL OYMENT	ECONOMIC_ GROWTH
IMMIGRATION_PERCENT	Pearson Correlation	1	,219**	-,206**	,258**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,004	,009	,001
	N	168	168	160	168
ASYLUM_PERCENT	Pearson Correlation	,219**	1	-,234**	,088
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,004		,002	,237
	N	168	182	174	182
UNEMPLOYMENT	Pearson Correlation	-,206**	-,234**	1	-,129
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,009	,002		,090
	N	160	174	174	174
ECONOMIC_GROWTH	Pearson Correlation	,258**	,088	-,129	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	,237	,090	
	N	168	182	174	182

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Appendix G - Interaction effect, yearly data

“Marginal Effect of Immigration on Importance of Immigration As Unemployment Changes”
 “Dependent Variable: Importance of the Immigration Issue”



Appendix H - Interaction effect, periods affected by financial crisis removed

“Marginal Effect of Immigration on Importance of Immigration As Unemployment Changes”

“Dependent Variable: Importance of the Immigration Issue”

