Identity, threat aversion, and civil servants' policy preferences: Evidence from the European Parliament

Colin R. Kuehnhanss[a,*], Zuzana Murdoch[b], Benny Geys[c], Bruno Heyndels[a]

[a] *Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Department of Applied Economics, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium.*
[b] *Department of Political Science and Management, University of Agder, Postboks 422, N-4604 Kristiansand, Norway.*
[c] *Department of Economics, Norwegian Business School (BI), Nydalsveien 37, N-0442 Oslo, Norway.*

Abstract

Distinct policy options are typically characterised by a number of advantages (or 'opportunities') and disadvantages (or 'threats'). The preference for one option over another depends on how individuals within an organisation perceive these opportunities and threats. In this article, we argue that individuals' identification with an organisation's core aims and objectives constitutes a key determinant of this perception. We propose that stronger identification shifts individuals' attention towards potential threats rather than opportunities in the payoff distribution, encouraging avoidance of negative outcomes. Moreover, we argue that this 'prevention focus' in individuals' motivational basis will be stronger under negative than under positive selection strategies. An original survey experiment with civil servants in the European Parliament finds significant evidence supporting the empirical implications of our argument.

Keywords: Organisational identity, Motivation theory, Public policy, European Parliament

1. Introduction

The advantages and disadvantages of distinct policy options generally become the subject of extensive deliberation and negotiation in both the private and public sector. The outcome of such negotiations and the implementation of the ensuing decisions determine the success or failure of an organisation. While the advantages of a given policy option can be viewed as 'opportunities' to reach favourable outcomes (e.g. high profit in the private sector, attaining educational or social welfare targets in the public or non-profit sector, . . .), the disadvantages can be perceived as possible 'threats' to the organisation and its goals. A large literature has highlighted the role of such threat and opportunity perceptions in a variety of contexts (Jackson and Dutton, 1988, and references therein). Yet, a critical subsequent question has received much less attention: What makes someone more or less likely to focus on either opportunities or threats in distinct policy proposals?[1] Identifying the drivers of such opportunity-vs.-threat perceptions is critical to our understanding of the policy preferences of political actors, and lies at the heart of our analysis.

We specifically focus on the role of individuals' identification with, and dedication to, an organisation's core aims and objectives – which constitutes a central element of organisational identification (Hall et al., 1970; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Scott and Lane, 2000). Individuals' organisational identification has been linked to outcomes including job satisfaction, individual well-being, and risk preferences. Building on motivation theory (Atkinson, 1957; Atkinson et al., 1960; Lopes, 1984, 1987) and prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979), we argue that a stronger identification of individuals with their organisation's goals also strengthens their motivation to avoid a policy failure. It particularly generates a 'prevention focus', and

---

*Corresponding author.
Email address: ckuehnha@vub.ac.be (Colin R. Kuehnhanss)
[1] Partial exceptions include Mohammed and Billings (2002) and Xie and Wang (2003), who highlight the importance of individuals' self-efficacy beliefs, and the balance between achievement and avoidance motivation, respectively.

shifts individuals' relative attention towards potential threats rather than opportunities in the payoff distribution. As such, it shifts preferences towards options avoiding negative outcomes during policy decisions. This has, to the best of our knowledge, not previously been tested, and constitutes the first central novelty of our article.

The second contribution of our article lies in assessing the role of the choice framework as a potential moderator of this shift. We maintain that an identification-driven shift in focal point towards threat avoidance is likely to arise predominantly for individuals whose (externally imposed) selection strategy consists of *rejecting* a least preferred option rather than *choosing* a preferred option. Evidence shows that a decision-maker's commitment to a selected option is at least partially dependent on the characteristics of the selection strategy used; i.e. on *choosing* or *rejecting* options (Shafir, 1993; Ganzach, 1995; Meloy and Russo, 2004). Positive selection strategies require an individual to make a firm commitment to one option, whereas negative strategies merely invite the acceptance of the least-bad option (Ganzach, 1995). When faced with distinct policy options, we argue that any inherent lack of commitment within different selection strategies can be compensated at least in part by individuals' identification with an organisation's core aims and objectives. The additional 'prevention focus' that a stronger identification generates thus is likely to matter most under negative selection strategies, where individuals' commitment to their preferred alternative is lower.

Our empirical analysis of these theoretical propositions is based on an online survey-experiment among civil servants within the European Parliament (i.e. 'Administrators' responsible for information preparation and dissemination; N=69). Such data obtained from public officials rather than students substantially benefit the external validity of our study (Druckman and Kam, 2011; Cappelen et al., 2015; Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017). Furthermore, the European Parliament's administration constitutes a particularly interesting setting for two reasons. First, these officials play an important role in the internal decision-making process within the European Parliament (Neunreither, 2002; Neuhold and Radulova, 2006; Winzen, 2011; Neuhold and Dobbels, 2015). Much like Administrators in the European Commission, they have the ability to influence policy decisions through the exploitation of bureaucratic discretion (Pollack, 2003; Olsen, 2006; Schafer, 2014) and by providing substantive guidance and support to Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and other stakeholders (Egeberg et al., 2013). This makes them of central relevance to our study. Second, the European Parliament's staff is subject to a regular rotational system, which makes it difficult for them to develop vested interests in certain policy areas or strong (and potentially problematic) personal ties with the stakeholders involved. Any political bias that could be expected from, for instance, politicians (such as MEPs) is thus likely to be largely absent among our respondents.

We present our respondents with hypothetical, but realistic, policy scenarios, and provide two possible policy options under each scenario. The options are manipulated to reflect different valences, whereby one option presents simultaneously more threats and opportunities than the other (for a similar approach, see, Shafir, 1993; Ganzach, 1995; Meloy and Russo, 2004). Participants express their preferences for one option in each scenario either under a positive or a negative selection framework. In the former, they choose their preferred option (henceforth 'choice frame'), whereas they reject their least favourite option in the negative framework (henceforth 'reject frame'). We analyse how their selections depend on respondents' level of identification with organisational goals.

Our main findings indicate that stronger identification with organisational goals is associated with higher levels of threat aversion in individuals' policy preferences. This is consistent with the idea that such identification induces a 'prevention focus', and shifts people towards avoiding policy features that may endanger the organisation's success. Furthermore, the effect of stronger identification is particularly relevant in a setting where respondents *reject* a least preferred option (rather than *choose* a preferred option). This corroborates the idea that individuals' stronger identification with organisational goals can compensate for lower feelings of commitment or responsibility for the final selection when rejecting one of two options (which need not imply a strong commitment *for* the remaining option). Both findings are robust to the exact operationalisation of individuals' identification with organisational goals.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

An organisational identity can be defined as "a collectively held frame within which organizational participants make sense of their world" (Scott and Lane, 2000, p.43). The extent to which individuals identify with, and are dedicated to, an organisation's goals constitutes a central element of such organisational identities (Hall et al., 1970; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Scott and Lane, 2000). Such identities and (the extent of) individuals' organisational identification are known to have important implications for individuals' preferences and behaviour.[2] For instance, psychological processes inducing the internalisation of the organisation's aims and goals strengthen individuals' motivation to reach group goals (Kramer and Brewer, 1984; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994), and make them more likely to take decisions benefiting the interests of the organisation even in the absence of direct supervision (Simon, 1976). Furthermore, the extent of individuals' identification with the organisation and its goals "systematically affects individuals' perceptions of issues" (Dutton and Penner, 1993, p.90). It "shape[s] interpretive predispositions that focus attention on some information and issues and exclude others" (Gioia and Thomas, 1996, p.372). Based on these findings, it can be expected that individuals identifying more strongly with an organisation and its core aims and objectives will look differently at the advantages (or 'opportunities') and disadvantages (or 'threats') embedded in distinct policy options.

This proposition can be grounded in motivation theory (Atkinson, 1957; Atkinson et al., 1960; Lopes, 1984, 1987), which maintains that individuals' motivation for action is determined by both a desire for success (the achievement motive) and a fear of failure (the avoidance motive). The relative strength of these counter-directional motivational tendencies governs individual-level preferences and decision-making in any given situation. They guide individuals' attention between the good and bad elements in a payoff distribution: achievement motives induce a focus on opportunities, whereas avoidance motives prompt a focus on threats.

Importantly, as argued by Lopes (1984, 1987), situational as well as individual dispositions determine whether people award more or less attention to good or bad outcomes (or, phrased differently, whether achievement or avoidance motives take the upper hand). In our view, individuals' identification with an organisations' core aims and objectives constitutes a key individual-level determinant of this shift in focus. It not only instils a desire to achieve the best possible outcome for the organisation (Kramer and Brewer, 1984; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994), but also prompts people to view policy issues through organisation-coloured lenses (Dutton and Penner, 1993; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). It focuses individuals' attention on what is best – or least bad – for the organisation.

Evidently, this implies that individuals' preferences depend on the discrepancy between their valuations of distinct policy proposals. Kahneman and Tversky's (1979) Prospect Theory – and the extensive empirical evidence in its favour – shows that preferences are based on a comparison of the expected outcome of a decision against a subjective reference point. Losses thereby loom larger than gains: the decrease in valuation from a prospect below the reference point is larger than the increase in valuation that a positive prospect of equivalent magnitude would bring (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979; Tversky and Kahneman, 1991). With "losses and disadvantages hav[ing] greater impact on preferences than gains and advantages" (Tversky and Kahneman, 1991, p.1039), the reaction to losses to the organisation will be intensified for an individual who identifies strongly with its core aims and objectives. These individuals' motive to avoid a failure is strengthened relative to the motive for achieving a success; they develop what we call a 'prevention focus'.[3] For an individual with a low level of identification with the organisation, however, any reference

---

[2]Space constraints prevent a deeper reflection on why people identify with their organisation, when they are most likely to do so, and how such identification occurs. We refer the interested reader to Pratt et al. (2016) for in-depth discussions of these issues as well as more critical perspectives on organisational identity.

[3]Recent (experimental) work on citizens' and politicians' responses to performance information likewise shows that especially information about negative performance induces stronger causal attribution of responsibility (Olsen, 2015; Nielsen and Moynihan, 2017). This 'negativity bias' has been argued to provide bureaucrats with an incentive to "follow a mini-max strategy and be more concerned with avoiding bad performances than with striving for excellence" (Hood and Dixon, 2010; Olsen, 2015, p.2). In line with our argument, negativity bias among citizens and politicians reflects one potential micro-foundation for bureaucrats' motivation to avoid a policy failure.

point may instead be largely independent from the organisation's success or failure. Discrepancy in the valuation of positive or negative prospects for the organisation should thus only have limited influence on their preferences. This discussion leads to our first testable proposition:

> *H1: A stronger identification with an organisation and its goals is associated with a threat-averse selection of policy options.*

Selection can in principle involve a positive strategy (i.e. *choosing* a preferred option) or a negative strategy (i.e. *rejecting* a least preferred option). These characteristics of the selection strategy can have an important effect on individuals. Shafir (1993), for instance, argues that such inconsistency with the invariance axiom of rational choice theory[4] arises because individuals put more weight on the relevant advantages of a particular option when formulating reasons to choose it and on its disadvantages when formulating reasons to reject it (see also Meloy and Russo, 2004). Ganzach (1995) instead maintains that selection strategies matter because people feel more committed to, or responsible for, their selected options under a choice frame, and therefore adjust their evaluation of available alternatives. The underlying idea is that a direct rejection of something does not necessarily imply a firm commitment for the remaining option; rather, it could be seen as a choice 'by default'. That is, "[o]ne has to live with the alternative [one] accepts, but not with the alternative [one] rejects" (Ganzach, 1995, p.115). This argument would imply that more weight will be put on the relevant *dis*advantages of available options when formulating reasons for *choosing* one of them.

The above reasoning has immediate implications for the effect of individuals' organisational identification on the selection process. Specifically, when one's selection under a choice strategy is already based on screening for potential negative outcomes, any additional 'prevention focus' generated by stronger identification might not matter so much anymore. One could think of this as a ceiling effect induced by high commitment under a positive selection strategy: One cannot avoid an undesirable option more than by not selecting it. The prevention focus arising from individuals' organisational identification will, however, still have an effect under the negative selection strategy. Since the inherent commitment to the selected option is lower in this case, no ceiling effect will arise. The direct empirical implication is that stronger identification with an organisations' goals reinforces individuals' motive to avoid a failure predominantly in a *negative* selection framework – but is likely to have a much weaker influence in a *positive* selection framework.

> *H2: Individuals' organisational identification affects their choices more under negative than positive selection frameworks.*

3. Empirical approach

To test our hypotheses, we ran a survey experiment with public officials in the European Parliament during the spring of 2015. In this section, we discuss, in turn, our case selection, the research design, and our empirical methodology.

3.1. Case selection

We study civil servants ('Administrators') working in the secretariat of the European Parliament, who play a central role in the preparation and dissemination of information throughout the Parliament's decision-making process. Within this secretariat, we focus on officials working in the Committee secretariats and information support units (i.e. policy departments). The reason is that these officials' work is linked most directly to the legislative process, making them of central relevance to our study.

The secretariats are organised around the Committees of the European Parliament, of which each deals with a specific set of policy areas: for instance, the Committees on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL),

---

[4]The invariance axiom states that different descriptions of, or approaches to, a given decision problem should not induce different preferences (Tversky and Kahneman, 1986).

Regional Development (REGI), Transport and Tourism (TRAN), etc. The majority of administrative staff works for one Committee at a time and follows a limited number of dossiers over the entire course of the legislative process. They coordinate intra- and inter-institutional meetings, act as liaison between the rapporteurs and the Commission and Council, and provide, for instance, background statistics and analyses, forecasts, policy briefings, and other information. Consequently, Administrators are often in direct contact with MEPs and other stakeholders, and provide technical and substantive guidance to them (Egeberg et al., 2013).[5] Although the power of Administrators within the European Parliament may be limited by the role of the hierarchy within the institution (Winzen, 2011), their ability to exploit bureaucratic discretion nonetheless provides a non-negligible influence in the policy-making process (Pollack, 2003; Olsen, 2006; Schafer, 2014). Several studies have shown that this allows them to impact (the early stages of) the Parliament's internal decision-making process (Neunreither, 2002; Neuhold and Radulova, 2006; Winzen, 2011; Neuhold and Dobbels, 2015). In this capacity, they might affect the content of subsequent policy decisions also by pre-selecting available options based on their feasibility and potential outcomes. Such influence is most likely to occur in internal deliberations and non-formal interactions with, for instance, rapporteurs, rather than at later stages when proposals and amendments have already been formalised and passed onto political debate. The selection frame applied to such considerations may depend on the precise circumstances surrounding the issue and the involved stakeholders.[6]

A focus on the European Parliament offers advantages on at least three other counts. First, as mentioned above, its staff is subject to a regular internal rotation system in which individuals generally change position every three to six years. By undermining the development of strong vested interests and/or personal ties in any given policy area, this implies that political bias is likely to be weaker among our respondents (compared to, for instance, politicians). Second, with its increasing powers, the European Parliament is slowly attracting more scientific attention, but most of this developing literature concentrates on parliamentarians – not public officials (notable exceptions include Egeberg et al., 2013, 2014a,b). Our explicit focus on the preferences of public officials thus helps developing a clearer picture of the entire European legislative process. Finally, behavioural approaches and experimental methods have in recent years become more prominent in the political sciences (James, 2011; James and Moseley, 2014; Blom-Hansen et al., 2015; Kuehnhanss et al., 2015; Nielsen and Baekgaard, 2015; George et al., forthcoming; Bækgaard et al., forthcoming), and are increasingly being introduced to the study of public administrations (Andersen and Moynihan, 2016; Andersen and Hjortskov, 2016; Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017; Jilke et al., 2016; Geys and Sørensen, 2017). However, such studies have thus far only considered national or sub-national levels of government, and fail to engage with the supranational level.

3.2. Research design

To collect the required data, an online survey-experiment was distributed via email within the two selected Directorates-General of the European Parliament. Information from the European Parliament's 2015 budget indicates that about 40% of its staff are Administrators, while 44% are Assistants and 16% are temporary staff. This implies that an estimated 360 Administrators received our survey. We obtained 69 responses from staff reporting to have Administrator contracts. Based on the shares of different contract types within the

---

[5]Note that we do not include 'Assistant'-level staff. Their typical tasks are more of an organisational and supportive nature and less concerned with the content creation of legislation.

[6]Note that under the Ordinary Legislative Procedure, policy proposals are initiated by the European Commission, and subsequently amended by the European Parliament and the Council. Only in the less frequent Own Initiative Reports may MEPs propose their own policies from the start. Under either procedure, however, choices still have to be made in the preparation of specific amendments and in the negotiation of compromise packages to be tabled. The bureaucrats involved in the preparation of these decisions will thereby face procedural and content decisions (e.g. when advising rapporteurs on viable compromises) via either positive or negative choice frames. This choice may in reality be a function of, among other aspects, the specific task, the starting position and room-for-manoeuvre in negotiation, and the relationship between the Administrator and the other stakeholders, including the rapporteur. As such, our theoretical considerations arguably are applicable to decision-making processes under either procedure within the EP. Nonetheless, it might be that Administrators are more or less concerned with minimising threats under one of both procedures (e.g., because of their different legal impact). While our data are unfortunately unable to address this question, it constitutes an important avenue for further research.

European Parliament, this would reflect a response rate of approximately 19 percent.[7] Summary statistics reflecting the composition of our sample are provided in table 1. For privacy reasons, we were not provided with any information regarding the descriptive background characteristics of the Administrators in the participating Directorates-General. Hence, we cannot provide a direct test of the representativeness of our sample. It is therefore particularly important to point out that the demographic composition of our sample is similar to previous reports of the European Parliament secretariats' composition (e.g. Egeberg et al., 2013, 2014a,b). The reported demographic composition in these studies closely matches our sample in terms of sex, age, education, and experience, which suggests little difference along these dimensions with the population of ADs in the selected DGs. Note, however, that compared to the selected DGs (which have the closest links to the political decision-making process), staff characteristics are likely to be different in less policy-driven DGs (e.g. due to different shares of Administrators in such DGs). Generalisations from the surveyed population to other DGs in the European Parliament or other public officials in the European Parliament may thus not be straightforward. On the political side of the decision-making process, for instance, other factors such as political constraints and bargaining may become more dominant (we return to this in our concluding discussion).

Table 1: Demographic composition of our sample.

Age		n	Gender		%
	26-35	9		Male	63.2
	36-45	27		Female	36.8
	46-55	24			
	56-65	8	Nationalities in sample		n
	65 <	1			18
Education		n	International study		n
	Bachelor	2		None	16
	Master	46		Up to 1 year	22
	Professional degree	3		More than 1 year	30
	PhD	16		n/a	1
	n/a	2			
Field of study		n	Grade		n
	Law	15		AD5 - AD6	12
	Economics	14		AD7 - AD8	18
	Politics / International Relations	25		AD9 - AD11	19
	Arts	4		AD12 - AD16	13
	Physical Science	5		n/a	7
	Engineering	4			
	n/a	2			
Years in Directorate-General			Years of work for the EU		
	Mean	5.04		Mean	9.10
	Min	0		Min	0
	Max	20		Max	25
	SD	3.82		SD	7.00

The central part of the survey presents respondents with up to five hypothetical, but realistic policy scenarios consisting of a policy issue and two policy proposals.[8] The policy issues are based on actual

---

[7]Note that participation in the survey was not monetised directly, but each completed survey induced a 2.50 donation to charity. Participants could vote on the charity of their choice after completing the survey.

[8]Initially, we included five policy scenarios. As some early respondents indicated that this made the survey overly demanding

policy considerations in the European institutions (sources provided in Appendix A) and relevant to broad sections of the population: i.e. youth unemployment, renewable energy, transport policy, cultural and language policy, and the rehabilitation of industrial areas. By covering a range of different and unrelated topics, we reduce the probability that unique policy aspects drive our respondents' choices across scenarios. Even so, we cannot exclude the possibility that particular features of the selected contexts differentiate them from other policy issues. With regard to testing our hypothesis, however, these topics provide an ideal basis as they are relevant enough to the European Parliament (otherwise no resources would have been spent on the studies listed in Appendix A), but not so politically entrenched as to no longer engender debate.

The two policy proposals presented to respondents for each policy issue consist of short statements on five key attributes of the policy at hand. To operationalise the opportunities and threats embedded in the distinct policy proposals, we differentiate both proposals via the combination of attributes with different valences (Shafir, 1993; Ganzach, 1995; Meloy and Russo, 2004). In one policy proposal (henceforth, 'impoverished'), all five attributes are formulated as neutrally as possible. Any outcomes are thus described as 'average', or are constructed not to provide any particular positive or negative associations. This impoverished policy option constitutes a 'baseline' reference point against which respondents will evaluate the other policy proposal. In the second policy proposal (henceforth, 'enriched'), two attributes are formulated as very positive (reflecting the opportunities provided by this option), two are formulated as very negative (reflecting the threats posed by this option), and one remains neutral. A detailed example is provided in table 2. Note that the positive attributes in the enriched proposal provide reasons for choosing it, but the negative attributes correspondingly offer reasons for rejecting it (Shafir, 1993). This is important for our purposes, because it implies that an individuals' relative focus on these positive/negative attributes will influence his/her final choice. We expect an individual's identification with an organisation's goals to play a key role in determining this relative focus.

Table 2: Example question with policy option attributes of varying valence.

Imagine that two proposals to mitigate youth-unemployment in southern Member States have emerged. Some of their expected outcomes are briefly sketched below. You are part of a working group tasked with their evaluation. [Which one do you choose to support? / After intense discussions on both proposals, you are only able to concentrate on one of them. Which proposal do you NOT support further?]
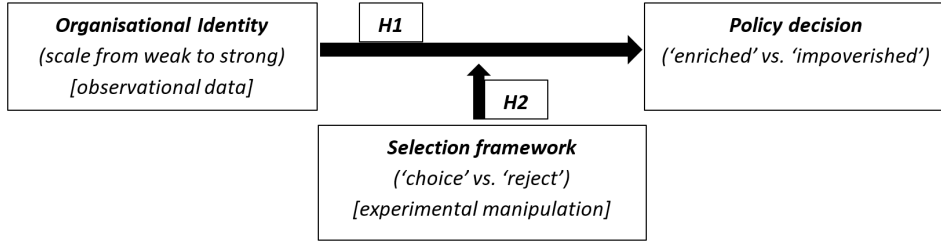
Proposal 1:	Proposal 2:
(o) Fund managers have normal rapport with project leaders; sometimes good, sometimes bad	(+) Fund managers have very good rapport with the project leaders, which benefits the projects
(o) Mixed results for the effectiveness of the funds for the target group (i.e. young people)	(+) Very effective use of the dispersed funds for the target group (i.e. young people)
(o) Projects need to apply individually either to the national agency or the supranational organisation	(o) Projects need to apply individually either to the national agency or the supranational organisation
(o) Average bureaucratic costs with most funds remaining available for projects	(-) High centralised bureaucratic cost reducing the allocable amount for projects
(o) Average progress with most help arriving at the projects in a reasonable amount of time	(-) Slow progress due to difficulties in finding good projects without knowledge of local conditions

Notes: In the choice frame only the first part in square brackets is presented, in the reject frame only the second part. Denotation of valences: (o) neutral; (+) positive; (-) negative.

After reviewing them, participants are requested to make a decision between both available policy pro-

---

in light of their busy schedules, later respondents were only presented with four policy scenarios. Eventually, nine respondents answered five scenarios, while 60 respondents answered four scenarios. Comparisons across these two groups show no significant differences for our dependent and main independent variables.

Figure 1: Graphical representation of the theoretical argument and research design

posals. This decision requires them – depending on the task frame – to either select their preferred proposal (the choice frame) *or* to reject their least preferred proposal (the reject frame). This selection is our central dependent variable in the analysis below.

Each respondent is before the start of the survey randomly assigned to one of seven versions. Each version contains different combinations of the frames and presents the hypothetical policy scenarios in a varying order to minimize ordering effects. Four versions contain only the choice or reject frames, and the remainder include both choice and reject frames. In total, 188 people opened the survey invitation (which triggered the randomization), and 102 individuals completed the survey. Anecdotal evidence from conversations with EP staff suggest that most of this drop-out was due to Assistant-level staff judging the presented tasks not to be relevant to them. 69 of the completed surveys were by AD-level staff with policy competences, which were of central interest to our analysis. All responses submitted by Administrators are included in the analysis.[9] As we observe no systematic differences between their answers across the different survey versions, we pool the responses and include version dummies throughout the empirical analysis to avoid any potential bias in our results. The research design here thus reflects a combination of a between-subjects design (i.e. when comparing <u>different</u> respondents' answers in the choice and reject frames) and a *within*-subjects design (i.e. when comparing the <u>same</u> respondents' answers across choice and reject frames in the mixed-frame versions of the survey).

Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of our research design and its link to our central hypotheses. Key variables in our theoretical argument are presented in boldface, with their operational variation in the empirical design indicated in parentheses. Further methodological information is provided in square brackets.

3.3. Empirical methodology

Our empirical model to test hypothesis H1 takes the following form (with subscript i for individuals):

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta OrgID_i + \gamma Frame + Controls_i + \varepsilon_i \tag{1}$$

The dependent variable Y_i is an indicator variable equal to 1 when individual i selects the enriched policy option either by actively choosing it in the choice frame or actively rejecting the impoverished option in the reject frame (0 otherwise). As such, our estimations use a logit approach. Our key independent variable – $OrgID_i$ – measures individuals' identification with an organisation's core aims and objectives, and support for H1 would be reflected in a negative coefficient estimate ($\beta < 0$). To operationalise individuals'

---

[9]Since we lost cases post-randomization, it is important to point out that this loss occurred equally across respondents allocated to the surveys with choice frames (31% of individuals starting the survey and 29% of respondents in our sample), the surveys with reject frames (28% of individuals starting the survey and 29% of respondents in our sample) and the surveys with both choice and reject frames (41% of individuals starting the survey and 43% of respondents in our sample). Hence, post-randomization drop-out did not bias the distribution of respondents to the frames, which is important for the validity of our inferences.

identification with the European Parliament's goals, we exploit the fact that the European Parliament aspires to increasingly shift the locus of authority in the European Union to the supranational level. In the language of European integration scholars, the European Parliament – much like the European Commission – maintains that the European Union should be governed primarily in supranational fashion rather than intergovernmental fashion (as desired by the Council of the European Union) (Murdoch, 2012; Egeberg et al., 2013, 2014a,b; Kassim et al., 2013). Hence, strong identification with the European Parliament's goals would imply that respondents i) are more favourable towards a distribution of decision-making power favouring the EU institutions relative to national governments (Kassim et al., 2013; Schafer, 2014; Murdoch et al., forthcoming), and ii) put more stress on EU concerns relative to national concerns in their day-to-day work (Murdoch and Trondal, 2013; Egeberg et al., 2014a,b; Trondal et al., 2015).

A first set of questions therefore enquires into respondents' preferred distribution of decision-making power in the European Union as an issue of sovereignty (i.e. the authority over a given policy, taken from Kassim et al., 2013; Schafer, 2014; Murdoch et al., forthcoming). EU-level decision-making as an issue of sovereignty remains high on the political agenda (Murdoch, 2012; Hobolt, 2014; Murdoch and Geys, 2014), which allows operationalising to what extent someone favours European over national decision-making power. The question employed in the survey reads: "What is your position on the distribution of authority between member states and the EU on public policies? Please indicate on an 11-point scale with '0' (exclusively national) to '10' (exclusively EU) where, in your opinion, this policy should be decided (which may, or may not, differ from where it currently is decided)." This question was asked for 13 policy areas, and the average response over all of them is our first measure of respondents' identification with the European Parliament's goals (EU_Power).[10]

A second set of questions asks about the emphasis respondents feel *should* be put on "common/overall EU concerns" and the "best interests of my home country" in their day-to-day work (taken from Murdoch and Trondal, 2013).[11] Responses are coded on a five-point scale with higher numbers reflecting stronger emphasis on a particular set of concerns. Clearly, social desirability is likely to induce our specific respondent sample to express stronger emphasis for EU rather than national interests. Even so, the *difference* between their answers on both questions can nonetheless provide a valid indication for respondents' relative attachment to the EU versus their home country (Murdoch and Trondal, 2013; Trondal et al., 2015). Consequently, this difference represents our second measure of respondents' identification with the European Parliament's goals ($EU\_Concerns$). Summary statistics for our dependent variable and the measures for $OrgID_i$ are provided in table 3.[12]

---

[10]The policy areas are: agriculture, energy policy, social policy, development policy, regional policy, competition policy, environmental policy, foreign and security policies, asylum and immigration, trade policy, police and judicial cooperation, education and culture policies, and transport policy. The inter-item correlation is highly satisfactory, as highlighted by Cronbach's scale reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.853$). This indicates that the responses for each of the items are closely aligned, which endorses our use of their average value as meaningful.

[11]The exact question reads: "In general, when working [with a European Commission proposal / on a proposal for submission to the President of the Parliament in a legislative initiative (under Article 225 TFEU)], how much emphasis do you think should be placed on [Best interests of my home country / Common/overall EU concerns]?"

[12]As our measures of identification and the respondents' choice of policy option derive from the same survey, one might worry that our estimate of β is affected by common source bias. There are a number of reasons, however, why we feel this is less critical in our setting. First, common source bias is caused by the existence of related measurement error in two (or more) *perceptual* variables derived from a common source (Favero and Bullock, 2015). Although respondents' self-perceived identification may well be subject to measurement error, it is less clear why this would be the case for respondents' policy choice. Second, the two measures of identification employed in our analysis made use of scales with very different properties. As this leads to varying degrees of measurement error, the consistency of our findings over distinct measures mitigates concerns about common source bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Finally, we calculated Harman's single factor test for an ex-post assessment of common source bias. While this explorative measure is not necessarily conclusive (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Favero and Bullock, 2015), we obtain uniqueness scores above 0.9 for all our constructs, indicating that a first-order method factor would only explain a very small part of the variance.

Table 3: Summary statistics for dependent and main independent variables.

Selected options and Frame			
Dependent variable (Y_i)	n	Frame	%
Enriched option	113	Choice	52.3
Impoverished option	172	Reject	47.7

Organisational Identification ($OrgID$)			
EU_Power (11-pt scale)		EU_Concerns (5-pt scale)	
Mean	6.79	Mean	2.68
Median	6.92	Median	3.00
Standard Deviation	1.25	Standard Deviation	1.09

To assess H2, we estimate equation 2, which includes an interaction between $OrgID_i$ and an indicator variable *Frame*. The latter is equal to 1 for selections made under the choice frame and 0 for selections made under the reject frame. To avoid biased inferences, we also include Frame as such in our model (Brambor et al., 2006).

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta OrgID_i + \gamma Frame + \delta Frame \times OrgID_i + Controls_i + \varepsilon_i \qquad (2)$$

The key parameter of interest in equation 2 is δ, which indicates to what extent the effect of identifying with the organisation's goals differs across both frames. Support for H2 requires that $\delta > 0$, which would imply that any negative effect of identification (as predicted under H1) is indeed stronger when individuals reject their least preferred option (i.e. *Frame* = 0) rather than choose their most preferred option (i.e. *Frame* = 1).[13]

Throughout all estimations, we include control variables for each of the specific policy issues presented to respondents and for the version of the survey to which respondents are randomly allocated. These account for any possible heterogeneity in selection decisions specific to the policy area or survey version. Although not really required when relying on experimental data (assuming successful randomization), we also experimented with additional controls for individuals' age, gender, nationality, educational background (i.e. highest degree, field of study and education abroad), grade and length of work in the European institutions as well as in the current position (see table 1). As there are too many nationalities with too few observations per country in our sample, we combine them into three different Regions: Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, and Central and Southern Europe. Corroborating the success of our random allocation of respondents, these background variables were generally statistically insignificant and were therefore not retained in the final model (with the sole exception of respondents' field of study). Still, to illustrate that our results are not determined by the exclusion of specific controls, table SI.7 in the supplementary information presents a set of results with the controls included.

4. Results

Our main findings are presented in table 4. We report estimated odds-ratios, since these give a clearer indication of the effect sizes compared to the coefficient estimates obtained from logistic regression models (table SI.6 in the supplementary information provides the coefficient estimates). Columns (1) through (3) report results using our main measure of identification with the European Parliament's supranational goals, which evaluates respondents' preferences over the distribution of power between the EU and member states. Columns (4) through (6) provide a robustness check with an alternative measure of identification, which

---

[13] A concise overview of the hypotheses, estimation methods, and our expectations is provided in table SI.5 in the supplementary information. Note that while our evaluation of the role of individuals' identification with the organisation and its goals (H1) is arguably non-experimental (since *OrgID* is not – and cannot be – randomized across respondents), the effect of the choice frame (H2) is experimental since it builds on the random allocation of respondents to the seven survey versions (see above).

Table 4: Estimation results (using odds ratios)

Selection of the enriched option	EU_Power			EU_Concerns		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Frame	0.520	0.123	0.123	0.548	0.133**	0.133**
	(0.232)	(0.193)	(0.193)	(0.255)	(0.116)	(0.116)
$OrgID_i$	0.811**	0.725**		0.835	0.592**	
	(0.085)	(0.116)		(0.107)	(0.135)	
$OrgID_i \times Frame$		1.242			1.686*	
		(0.287)			(0.478)	
$OrgID_i \times Reject$			0.725**			0.592**
			(0.116)			(0.135)
$OrgID_i \times Choose$			0.901			0.998
			(0.139)			(.153)
Field of study dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Question dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Condition dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
n of selections made	285	285	285	285	285	285
Pseudo-R^2	0.115	0.095	0.117	0.112	0.094	0.121

Notes: Logistic regression models with standard errors clustered at the level of the individual respondent in parentheses; $^*p < 0.10,^{**} p < 0.05,^{***} p < 0.01$. The dummy variable *Frame* is 0 for Reject and 1 for Choice. The Question and Condition dummies control for order- and question-specific effects. They are omitted from the table for clarity. EU_Power = Average across the 13 autonomy questions; EU_Concerns = EU concerns - Home concerns questions.

captures the difference respondents assign to the importance of EU and home country concerns in the formulation of legislation. The results in columns (1) and (4) follow from estimating equation 1, while the results in columns (2) and (5) follow from estimating equation 2. Finally, the results in columns (3) and (6) provide a more direct estimate of the conditional marginal effects of individual's identification in the choice and reject frames, respectively. Specifically, we estimated:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \gamma Frame + \theta Choice\text{-}Frame \times OrgID_i + \zeta Reject\text{-}Frame \times OrgID_i + Controls + \varepsilon_i \qquad (3)$$

where *Reject-Frame* and *Choice-Frame* are indicator variables equal to 1 for selections made under, respectively, the reject frame or choice frame (0 otherwise). The coefficient estimates θ and ζ reflect the effects of identifying with the European Parliament's goals in the choice and reject frames, respectively. This follows Brambor et al.'s (2006, p.73) recommendation to document a 'substantively meaningful description of the marginal effects of the independent variables and the uncertainty with which they are estimated'. Note that the unit of observation in our analysis is a policy decision, and that our 69 respondents face four (or five) decisions (which leads to $n = 285$ in table 4). To account for the fact that answers by the same respondent on the various policy scenarios are not independent of each other, standard errors are clustered at the level of the individual respondent in all models (Wooldridge, 2003).

The results in table 4 provide substantial evidence in support of hypothesis H1. Indeed, the estimated odds ratio for $OrgID_i$ is smaller than one, and statistically significantly different from one at conventional levels in column (1). The same is observed in column (4), although the estimate fails to reach statistical significance in this case. Overall, these results suggest that the probability of selecting the enriched option (relative to the probability of *not* selecting it) decreases by 16 to 19 percent for each unit increase in individuals' identification with the European Parliament's goals. For an arguably more accessible graphical representation of these results – expressed in terms of the predicted probability of selecting the enriched option – see the top panel of figure B.2 in the appendix. These findings are in line with our argument that stronger identification induces a 'prevention focus' in individuals' motivational basis. Such identification generates a preference for the average/neutral policy proposal, and the avoidance of policy proposals that carry potential threats.

11

Columns (2) and (4) indicate that the estimated odds ratio on the interaction term $Frame \times OrgID_i$ is larger than one – in agreement with hypothesis H2 – but remains statistically insignificant. This provides some initial evidence in line with the idea that the effect of identifying with an organisation's core goals is stronger for a negative selection framework than for a positive selection framework. Yet, the exact effects of identification in the choice and reject frames can be evaluated more readily based on the results in columns (3) and (6), where the effect of organisational identification is split by $Frame$.[14] This shows that the effect of identification in the choice frame is statistically insignificant. Its effect on respondents in the reject frame, however, is statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. It is also substantively large in this case. The estimated odds ratio indicates that the probability of selecting the enriched option in the reject frame (relative to the probability of *not* selecting it) decreases by 29 to 41 percent for each unit increase in individuals' identification with the European Parliament's goals. A graphical representation is provided in the bottom panel of figure B.2 in the appendix. Overall, the effect of identification appears to be contingent on the decision-making frame provided to respondents. This is in line with hypothesis H2, which states that identification with an organisation and its goals is more important under negative than under positive selection strategies. A higher level of identification may act as a substitute for the commitment felt under a positive selection strategy, encouraging the rejection of options perceived as carrying a threat to the organisation.[15]

5. Conclusion

This article provides empirical support for the idea that individuals' identification with an organisation and its core aims and objectives guides their opportunity-vs.-threat focus in situations where distinct policy proposals are characterised by advantages and disadvantages. Our behavioural perspective on individual-level policy preferences advances the understanding of organisational decision-making in several ways.

From a theoretical perspective, our analysis brings forward individuals' *organisational identification* as a dispositional characteristic underlying preference-formation in an institutional context. Previous research has extensively documented how organisational identification influences, for instance, individuals' motivation (Kramer and Brewer, 1984; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994) and their issue perceptions (Dutton and Penner, 1993; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). We contribute to this literature by arguing that identification impacts individuals' policy preferences by shifting the relative focus on the advantages and disadvantages of available policy options. We thereby likewise contribute to the integration of behavioural elements into the analysis of policy-making, which is recently receiving increased attention (James, 2011; Andersen and Moynihan, 2016; Olsen, 2017; Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017; Riccucci et al., 2016; Geys and Sørensen, 2017).

From a policy perspective, our results suggest that strategic manipulation of the positive/negative valence of various policy proposals under consideration, or imposing selection under choice/reject frames, can have an important influence already during the *preparatory* policy-making phases. Clearly, this is likely to have implications also for later stages in the policy design and implementation (e.g., because some options will simply no longer be on the table at later stages).[16] Importantly, such an effect is independent of the further influence of similar strategic accentuation of the (dis)advantages of certain options – for instance, by labelling them as 'threats' and/or 'opportunities' (Dutton and Jackson, 1987; Gioia and Thomas, 1996) – at later stages of the decision-making process. As such, our results highlight the importance of carefully considering the decisions taken (and selection structures imposed) at different stages of a policy-making process to avoid undue sources of decision bias.

Finally, we contribute to experimental work on organisational decision-making by relying on data obtained from *actual* public officials rather than students. Moreover, our policy scenarios derive from analyses

---

[14]Replicating the analysis on sub-samples split according to the administered Frame provides similar results (see table SI.8 in the supplementary information).

[15]Note that the significance of *Frame* at the 95 percent level in columns (5) and (6) reflects a conditional effect when $OrgID_i = 0$. This occurs only for one respondent in our sample. Hence, for the large majority of our sample, Frame in itself has no statistically significant effect.

[16]In similar vein, Murdoch (2012, p.1022) recently argued that the "translation of ideas into drafts of legal text generates the ability to obtain influence" over final decisions, because it structures subsequent discussions into a given direction.

of policy-relevant topics carried out by the European institutions rather than abstract situations. This more realistic approach and sample substantially benefits the external validity of the inferences derived in this type of experiment (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2017). However, public officials may not exercise their discretion in a hypothetical policy scenario in the same way they would during actual policy preparations. Any generalisations from our hypothetical policy context to real-world behaviour thus require further validation on actual decision-making (see Andersen and Hjortskov, 2016). Unfortunately, the time-frames involved in political decision-making may make it very difficult to verify the identified mechanisms in the real-world. Furthermore, any attempt at generalising our findings to other public officials in the European Parliament (who often have different roles) or to MEPs and other political actors, would naturally require further substantiation among these sets of actors. We particularly consider the extension of our analysis to MEPs (and specifically to rapporteurs) a very interesting avenue for future research.

Another current limitation of our analysis is – although our research design incorporates different policy scenarios – the limited number of observations which does not allow us to explore potential sources of heterogeneity in the observed effects across distinct policies. Yet, the content of the scenario might matter. One might indeed hypothesise that individuals are prompted to adopt a prevention focus particularly when the decision under consideration has tangible rather than intangible effects, or when the policy issue has higher salience (within the European Parliament or the broader public). These potential conditioning effects of issue salience and tangibility constitute important avenues for further research.

Acknowledgements

Appendix A. Sources for policy scenarios

- European Commission. (2013). *EU measures to tackle youth unemployment.* Brochure, available from: `http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11578&langId=en` [Accessed 11 March 2015].

- European Commission. (2013). *European Commission guidance for the design of renewables support schemes.* Commission Staff Working Document, available from: `http://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/com_2013_public_intervention_swd04_en.pdf` [Accessed 11 March 2015].

- European Parliament. (2010). *The Promotion of Cycling.* Note, available from: `http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2010/431592/IPOL-TRAN_NT(2010)431592_EN.pdf` [Accessed 15 March 2015].

- European Parliament. (2013). *Endangered Languages and linguistic Diversity in the European Union.* Note, available from: `http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/495851/IPOL-CULT_NT(2013)495851_EN.pdf` [Accessed 11 March 2015].

- European Parliament. (2013). *Regional Strategies for Industrial Areas.* Note, available from: `http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/regi/dv/pe495848_/pe495848_en.pdf` [Accessed 11 March 2015].

Appendix B. Graphical representation of results

Panel I: General effect
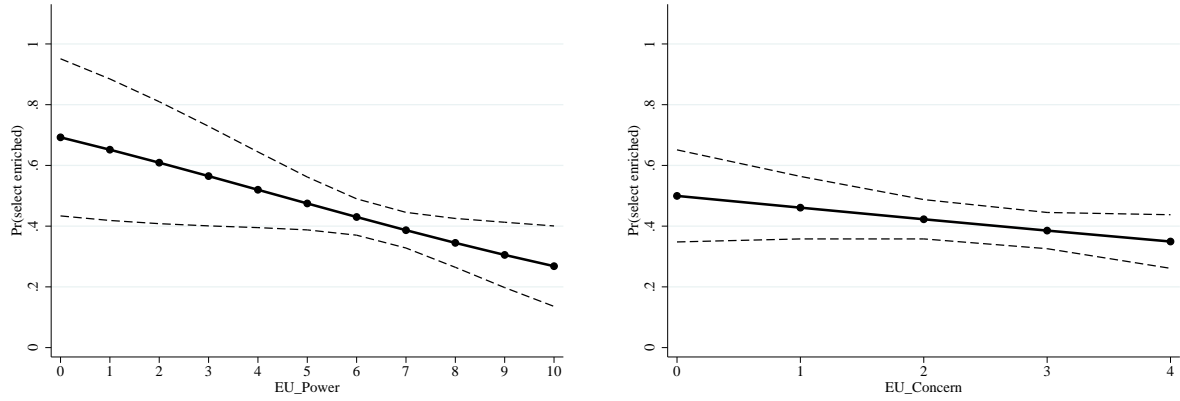
Panel II: Effects separated by selection frame
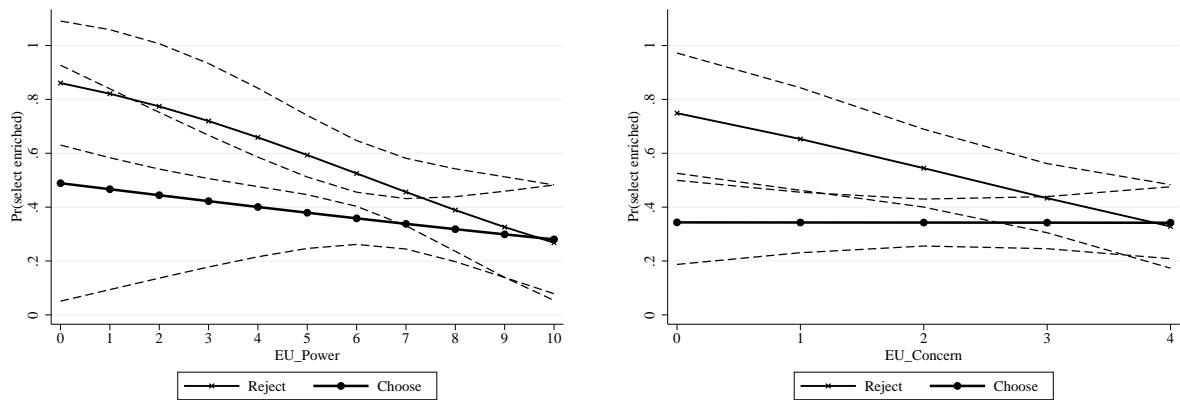
Figure B.2: Predicted probabilities of choosing the enriched option with 95% confidence intervals

Notes: The figure presents results obtained from logistic regression models with standard errors clustered at the level of the individual respondent. Panel I presents the overall effect of organizational identification, while Panel II displays separate effects depending on the selection frame provided to respondents. In both cases, the graphical representation on the left-hand side is based on the regression results for EU_Power (Average across the 13 autonomy questions) to operationalize organizational identification, while the graphical representation on the right-hand side is based on the regression results for EU_Concerns (EU concerns - Home concerns questions).

Supplementary information.

H1: *A stronger identification with an organisation and its goals is associated with a threat-averse selection of policy options.*	
Estimation model:	$Y_i = \alpha + \beta OrgID_i + \gamma Frame + Controls_i + \varepsilon_i$
Expectation:	$\beta < 0$ *OrgID* correlates negatively with the choice of the enriched option
H2: *Individuals' identification with an organisation and its goals affects their choices more under negative than under positive selection frameworks.*	
Estimation model:	$Y_i = \alpha + \beta OrgIDi + \gamma Frame + \delta Frame \times OrgID_i + Controls_i + \varepsilon_i$
Expectation:	$\beta < 0$ *OrgID* correlates negatively with the choice of the enriched option
	$\delta > 0$ *OrgID* correlates more negatively with the choice of the enriched option under the Reject frame
Estimation model:	$Yi = \alpha + \beta Frame + \zeta Reject - Frame * OrgIDi + \theta Choice - Frame * OrgID_i + Controls_i + \varepsilon_i$
Expectation:	$\zeta < 0$ Negative correlation of *OrgID* with the choice of the enriched option in the Reject frame
	$\theta < \zeta$ Weaker negative correlation of *OrgID* with the choice of the enriched option in the Choose frame

Notes: The dependent variable Yi is always an indicator variable equal to 1 for the choice of the enriched policy option (carrying both opportunities and threats), and 0 for choice of the impoverished option.

Table SI.6: Estimation results (using coefficient estimates)

	EU_Power			EU_Concerns		
Selection of enriched option	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Frame	−.654	−1.317	−2.094	−.601	−1.826**	−2.017**
	(.445)	(1.530)	(1.566)	(.466)	(.791)	(.873)
$OrgID_i$	−.209**	−.281*		−.180	−.412**	
	(.105)	(.228)		(.129)	(.206)	
$OrgID_i \times Frame$		.094			.434	
		(.228)			(.269)	
$OrgID_i \times Reject$			−.321**			−.523**
			(.160)			(.228)
$OrgID_i \times Choose$			−.104			−.002
			(.154)			(.154)
Field of Study						
Economics	−.568		−.629	−.506		−.495
	(.382)		(.398)	(.371)		(.373)
Law	−.900**		−.945**	−1.03***		−1.107***
	(.373)		(.386)	(.365)		(.375)
Constant	2.022**	2.169*	2.851**	1.116	1.426*	2.099**
	(.803)	(1.114)	(1.197)	(.756)	(.839)	(.968)
Question dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Condition dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
n of selections made	285	285	285	285	285	285
Pseudo-R^2	0.115	0.095	0.117	0.112	0.094	0.121

Notes: Logistic regression models with standard errors clustered at the level of the individual respondent in parentheses; $^*p < 0.10, ^{**}p < 0.05, ^{***}p < 0.01$. The dummy variable *Frame* is 0 for Reject and 1 for Choice. The Question and Condition dummies control for order- and question-specific effects. They are omitted from the table for clarity. EU_Power = Average across the 13 autonomy questions; EU_Concerns = EU concerns - Home concerns questions.

Table SI.7: Specification as in Columns (3) and (6) of table 4 with additional controls

Selection of enriched option	EU_Power		EU_Concerns	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Frame	−2.046	−2.524	−2.183**	−2.024**
	(1.945)	(1.761)	(0.903)	(0.893)
$OrgID_i \times Reject$	−0.338*	−0.431**	−0.506**	−0.506**
	(0.205)	(0.186)	(0.243)	(0.236)
$OrgID_i \times Choose$	−0.170	−0.169	−0.006	−0.014
	(0.192)	(0.176)	(0.198)	(0.168)
Age	0.114		0.266	
	(0.225)		(0.216)	
Gender	−0.097		−0.023	
	(0.363)		(0.385)	
Years in DG	−0.055		−0.037	
	(0.045)		(0.048)	
Years in EU	0.013		−0.006	
	(0.031)		(0.031)	
Field of Study	*Political science and others is reference group*			
Economics	−0.228	−0.519	−0.119	−0.412
	(0.504)	(0.465)	(0.467)	(0.453)
Law	−1.134***	−1.029***	−1.346***	−1.227***
	(0.415)	(0.383)	(0.406)	(0.369)
Study abroad	*None is reference group*			
Up to 1 year	0.642	0.461	0.493	0.171
	(0.519)	(0.492)	(0.517)	(0.481)
More than 1 year	1.218**	0.939**	1.065**	0.632
	(0.513)	(0.479)	(0.533)	(0.484)
Region	*Eastern Europe is reference group*			
North	0.278	0.231	0.314	0.374
	(0.491)	(0.439)	(0.504)	(0.462)
Central and South	0.447	0.433	0.294	0.292
	(0.492)	(0.416)	(0.488)	(0.437)
Constant	2.031	2.821**	0.765	1.606
	(1.838)	(1.415)	(1.349)	(1.174)
Question dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes
Condition dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes
n of selections made	285	285	285	285
Pseudo-R^2	0.145	0.141	0.147	0.137

Notes: Logistic regression models with standard errors clustered at the level of the individual respondent in parentheses; reported values are coefficient estimates; *$p < 0.10$,** $p < 0.05$,*** $p < 0.01$. The dummy variable *Frame* is 0 for Reject and 1 for Choice. The Question and Condition dummies control for order- and question-specific effects. They are omitted from the table for clarity. EU_Power = Average across the 13 autonomy questions; EU_Concerns = EU concerns - Home concerns questions.

Table SI.8: Estimations with sub-samples defined according to administered Frame

| | EU_Power | | EU_Concerns | |
	Reject	Choose	Reject	Choose
Selection of enriched option	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
$OrgID_i$	−0.280*	−0.018	−0.537**	0.016
	(0.163)	(0.150)	(0.232)	(0.154)
Field of Study	*Political science and others is reference group*			
Economics	0.115	−1.614**	0.390	−1.625**
	(0.538)	(0.765)	(0.514)	(0.739)
Law	−0.246	−1.536**	−0.590	−1.544***
	(0.421)	(0.596)	(0.405)	(0.579)
Constant	2.444*	0.810	1.361	0.666
	(1.439)	(0.982)	(1.049)	(0.735)
Question dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes
Condition dummies	yes	yes	yes	yes
n of selections made	136	149	136	149
Pseudo-R^2	0.115	0.162	0.127	0.162

Notes: Logistic regression models with standard errors clustered at the level of the individual respondent in parentheses; reported values are coefficient estimates; *$p < 0.10$,** $p < 0.05$,*** $p < 0.01$. The dummy variable *Frame* is 0 for Reject and 1 for Choice. The Question and Condition dummies control for order- and question-specific effects. They are omitted from the table for clarity. EU_Power = Average across the 13 autonomy questions; EU_Concerns = EU concerns - Home concerns questions.

References

Andersen, S.C., Hjortskov, M., 2016. Cognitive biases in performance evaluations. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 26(4), 647–662. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/muv036.

Andersen, S.C., Moynihan, D.P., 2016. Bureaucratic investments in expertise: Evidence from a randomized controlled field trial. The Journal of Politics 78(4), 1032–1044. DOI: 10.1086/686029.

Ashforth, B.E., Mael, F., 1989. Social identity theory and the organization. Academy of Management Review 14(1), 20–39. DOI: 10.5465/AMR.1989.4278999.

Atkinson, J.W., 1957. Motivational determinants of risk-taking behavior. Psychological Review 64(6, pt. 1), 359–372. DOI: 10.1037/h0043445.

Atkinson, J.W., Bastian, J.R., Earl, R.W., Litwin, G.H., 1960. The achievement motive, goal setting, and probability preferences. The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 60(1), 27–36. DOI: 10.1037/h0047990.

Bækgaard, M., Christensen, J., Dahlmann, C.M., Mathiasen, A., Petersen, N.B., forthcoming. The role of evidence in politics: Motivated reasoning and persuasion among politicians. British Journal of Political Science .

Blom-Hansen, J., Morton, R., Serritzlew, S., 2015. Experiments in public management research. International Public Management Journal 18(2), 151–170. DOI: 10.1080/10967494.2015.1024904.

Brambor, T., Clark, W.R., Golder, M., 2006. Understanding interaction models: Improving empirical analyses. Political Analysis 14(1), 63–82. DOI: 10.1093/pan/mpi014.

Cappelen, A.W., Nygaard, K., Sørensen, E.Ø., Tungodden, B., 2015. Social preferences in the lab: A comparison of students and a representative population. The Scandinavian Journal of Economics 117(4), 1306–1326. DOI: 10.1111/sjoe.12114.

Druckman, J.N., Kam, C.D., 2011. Students as experimental participants: A defense of the 'narrow data base', in: Druckman, J.N., Green, D.P., Kuklinski, J.H., Lupia, A. (Eds.), Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science. Cambridge University Press, New York, pp. 41–57.

Dutton, J.E., Dukerich, J.M., Harquail, C.V., 1994. Organizational images and member identification. Administrative Science Quarterly 39(2), 239–263. DOI: 10.2307/2393235.

Dutton, J.E., Jackson, S.E., 1987. Categorizing strategic issues: Links to organizational action. Academy of Management Review 12(1), 76–90. DOI: 10.5465/AMR.1987.4306483.

Dutton, J.E., Penner, W.J., 1993. The importance of organizational identity for strategic agenda building, in: Hendry, J., Johnson, G. (Eds.), Strategic Thinking: Leadership and Management of Choice. John Wiley & Sons Ltd, London, pp. 89–113.

Egeberg, M., Gornitzka, Å., Trondal, J., 2014a. A not so technocratic executive? everyday interaction between the European Parliament and the Commission. West European Politics 37(1), 1–18. DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2013.832952.

Egeberg, M., Gornitzka, Å., Trondal, J., 2014b. People who run the European Parliament: Staff demography and its implications. Journal of European Integration 36(7), 659–675. DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2014.935362.

Egeberg, M., Gornitzka, Å., Trondal, J., Johannessen, M., 2013. Parliament staff: unpacking the behaviour of officials in the European Parliament. Journal of European Public Policy 20(4), 495–514. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2012.718885.

Favero, N., Bullock, J.B., 2015. How (not) to solve the problem: An evaluation of scholarly responses to common source bias. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 25(1), 285–308. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/muu020.

Ganzach, Y., 1995. Attribute scatter and decision outcome: Judgment versus choice. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes 62(1), 113–122. DOI: 10.1006/obhd.1995.1036.

George, B., Desmidt, S., Nielsen, P.A., Baekgaard, M., forthcoming. Rational planning and politicians preferences for spending and reform: Replication and extension of a survey experiment. Public Management Review .

Geys, B., Sørensen, R.J., 2017. Never change a winning policy? Public sector performance and politicians preferences for reforms. Mimeo .

Gioia, D.A., Thomas, J.B., 1996. Identity, image, and issue interpretation: Sensemaking during strategic change in academia. Administrative Science Quarterly 41(3), 370–403. DOI: 10.2307/2393936.

Grimmelikhuijsen, S., Jilke, S., Leth Olsen, A., Tummers, L., 2017. Behavioral public administration: Combining insights from public administration and psychology. Public Administration Review 77(1), 45–56. DOI: 10.1111/puar.12609.

Hall, D.T., Schneider, B., Nygren, H.T., 1970. Personal factors in organizational identification. Administrative Science Quarterly 15(2), 176–190. DOI: 10.2307/2391488.

Hobolt, S.B., 2014. Ever closer or ever wider? public attitudes towards further enlargement and integration in the European Union. Journal of European Public Policy 21(5), 664–680. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2014.897746.

Hood, C., Dixon, R., 2010. The political payoff from performance target systems: No-brainer or no-gainer? Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 20(suppl 2), i281–i298. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/muq022.

Jackson, S.E., Dutton, J.E., 1988. Discerning threats and opportunities. Administrative Science Quarterly 33(3), 370–387. DOI: 10.2307/2392714.

James, O., 2011. Performance measures and democracy: Information effects on citizens in field and laboratory experiments. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 21(3), 399–418. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/muq057.

James, O., Moseley, A., 2014. Does performance information about public services affect citizens perceptions, satisfaction and voice behaviour? Field experiments with absolute and relative performance information. Public Administration 92(2), 493–511. DOI: 10.1111/padm.12066.

Jilke, S., Van de Walle, S., Kim, S., 2016. Generating usable knowledge through an experimental approach to public administration. Public Administration Review 76(1), 69–72. DOI: 10.1111/puar.12488.

Kahneman, D., Tversky, A., 1979. Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. Econometrica 47(2), 263–291. DOI: 10.2307/1914185.

Kassim, H., Peterson, J., Bauer, M.W., Connolly, S., Dehousse, R., Hooghe, L., Thompson, A., 2013. The European Commission of the Twenty-First Century. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Kramer, R.M., Brewer, M.B., 1984. Effects of group identity on resource use in a simulated commons dilemma. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 46(5), 1044–1057. DOI: 10.1037/0022-3514.46.5.1044.

Kuehnhanss, C.R., Heyndels, B., Hilken, K., 2015. Choice in politics: Equivalency framing in economic policy decisions and the influence of expertise. European Journal of Political Economy 40(pt.B), 360–374. DOI: 10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2015.06.001.

Lopes, L.L., 1984. Risk and distributional inequality. Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance 10(4), 465. DOI: 10.1037/0096-1523.10.4.465.

Lopes, L.L., 1987. Between hope and fear: The psychology of risk. Advances in Experimental Social Psychology 20(3), 255–295.

Meloy, M.G., Russo, J.E., 2004. Binary choice under instructions to select versus reject. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes 93(2), 114–128. DOI: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2003.12.002.

Mohammed, S., Billings, R.S., 2002. The effect of self-efficacy and issue characteristics on threat and opportunity categorization. Journal of Applied Social Psychology 32(6), 1253–1275. DOI: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.2002.tb01435.x.

Murdoch, Z., 2012. Negotiating the European External Action Service (EEAS): Analyzing the external effects of internal (dis) agreement. JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies 50(6), 1011–1027. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-5965.2012.02285.x.

Murdoch, Z., Connolly, S., Kassim, H., forthcoming. Administrative legitimacy and the 'democratic deficit' of the European Union. Journal of European Public Policy .

Murdoch, Z., Geys, B., 2014. Institutional dynamics in international organizations: Lessons from the recruitment procedures of the European External Action Service. Organization Studies 35(12), 1793–1811. DOI: 10.1177/0170840614544558.

Murdoch, Z., Trondal, J., 2013. Contracted government: Unveiling the European Commission's contracted staff. West European Politics 36(1), 1–21. DOI: 10.1080/01402382.2013.742734.

Neuhold, C., Dobbels, M., 2015. Paper keepers or policy shapers? The conditions under which EP officials impact on the EU policy process. Comparative European Politics 13(5), 577–595. DOI: 10.1057/cep.2014.7.

Neuhold, C., Radulova, E., 2006. The involvement of administrative players in the EU decision-making process, in: Türk, A., Hoffmann, H. (Eds.), EU Administrative Governance. Edward Elgar Publishers, Cheltenham.

Neunreither, K., 2002. Elected legislators and their unelected assistants in the European Parliament. Journal of Legislative Studies 8(4), 40–60. DOI: 10.1080/13572330200870004.

Nielsen, P.A., Baekgaard, M., 2015. Performance information, blame avoidance, and politicians attitudes to spending and reform: Evidence from an experiment. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 25(2), 545–569. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/mut051.

Nielsen, P.A., Moynihan, D.P., 2017. How do politicians attribute bureaucratic responsibility for performance? Negativity bias and interest group advocacy. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 27(2), 269–283. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/muw060.

Olsen, A.L., 2015. Negative performance information causes asymmetrical evaluations and elicits strong responsibility attributions, Annual meeting of the American Political Science Association. URL: http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.724.7710&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

Olsen, A.L., 2017. Human interest or hard numbers? Experiments on citizens selection, exposure, and recall of performance information. Public Administration Review 77(3), 408–420. DOI: 10.1111/puar.12638.

Olsen, J.P., 2006. Maybe it is time to rediscover bureaucracy. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 16(1), 1–24. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/mui027.

Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Lee, J.Y., Podsakoff, N.P., 2003. Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. Journal of Applied Psychology 88(5), 879–903. DOI: 10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879.

Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Podsakoff, N.P., 2012. Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendations on how to control it. Annual Review of Psychology 63, 539–569. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100452.

Pollack, M., 2003. The Engines of European Integration: Delegation, Agency and Agenda Setting in the EU. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Pratt, M., Schultz, M., Ashforth, B., Ravasi, D., 2016. The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Identity. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Riccucci, N.M., Van Ryzin, G.G., Li, H., 2016. Representative bureaucracy and the willingness to coproduce: An experimental study. Public Administration Review 76(1), 121–130. DOI: 10.1111/puar.12401.

Schafer, J., 2014. European Commission officials' policy attitudes. JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies 52(4), 911–927. DOI: 10.1111/jcms.12115.

Scott, S.G., Lane, V.R., 2000. A stakeholder approach to organizational identity. Academy of Management Review 25(1), 43–62. DOI: 10.5465/AMR.2000.2791602.

Shafir, E., 1993. Choosing versus rejecting: Why some options are both better and worse than others. Memory & Cognition 21(4), 546–556. DOI: 10.3758/BF03197186.

Simon, H.A., 1976. Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-making Processes in Administrative Organization. Free Press, New York.

Trondal, J., Murdoch, Z., Geys, B., 2015. On Trojan Horses and revolving doors: Assessing the autonomy of national officials in the European Commission. European Journal of Political Research 54(2), 249–270. DOI: 10.1111/1475-6765.12080.

Tversky, A., Kahneman, D., 1986. Rational choice and the framing of decisions. The Journal of Business 59(4, pt.2), S251–S278. DOI: 10.1086/296365.

Tversky, A., Kahneman, D., 1991. Loss aversion in riskless choice: A reference-dependent model. Quarterly Journal of Economics 106(4), 1039–1061. DOI: 10.2307/2937956.

Winzen, T., 2011. Technical or political? An exploration of the work of officials in the committees of the European Parliament. Journal of Legislative Studies 17(1), 27–44. DOI: 10.1080/13572334.2011.545177.

Wooldridge, J.M., 2003. Cluster-sample methods in applied econometrics. The American Economic Review 93(2), 133–138. DOI: 10.1257/000282803321946930.

Xie, X.F., Wang, X.T., 2003. Risk perception and risky choice: Situational, informational and dispositional effects. Asian Journal of Social Psychology 6(2), 117–132. DOI: 10.1111/1467-839X.t01-1-00015.