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# The effects of news frames and political speech sources on political attitudes: The moderating role of values

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**Abstract:** This study investigated the extent to which values play a role in affecting citizens' political attitudes when exposed to different media news frames and political speech sources. To test this, we designed a survey experiment which used news coverage of a political speech concerning the cultural practices of immigrants ( $N = 337$ ). We manipulated the manner of how the news was framed (episodic vs. thematic) and the source of the speech (domestic vs. foreign politician). Our main finding shows that citizens who scored high on 'universalism' were more affected by a foreign source in an episodic news frame, compared to those scoring low on 'universalism' in a thematic news frame. On the other hand, in a thematic news frame, the difference between citizens scoring high and low on 'universalism' was found for the domestic source. This suggests that values are a fundamental moderator of media effects in determining citizens' political attitudes.

**Keywords:** news frames, political attitudes, political speech sources, values

## 1 Introduction

Previous studies have shown that media coverage characteristics such as news frames (Iyengar, 1991), source characteristics (Domke, Lagos, Lapointe, Meade,

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and Xenos, 2000), and a combination of these two factors (Druckman, 2001) play important roles in citizens' interpretation of political issues and in public opinion formation. However, over the years, scholars have acknowledged that the information relayed through the media does not have the same impact on all citizens due to their differing personal qualities such as different personal values (Shen and Edwards, 2005). According to Schwartz (1992), values guide the evaluation of actions, policies, people, and events. They are often firmly established which leads people to behave according to them even without consciously thinking about them. Considering its central function in peoples' lives, values are expected to guide citizens' interpretation of political information that they receive from the media.

The combination of values and media effects on political attitudes has not been completely ignored by scholars (see Shen and Edwards, 2005). However, relatively little is known about the interaction of values with other factors in affecting public opinion. Therefore, to understand the extent to which values guide citizens' interpretation of political information received from the media, our study investigates the effect of news frames and message sources on political attitudes when moderated by values. More specifically, we will test citizens' attitudes towards immigrants when the news coverage of a political speech is framed in different ways, when the speech source is foreign or domestic, and when different levels of importance are placed on particular values.

We have chosen to focus on the news coverage of political speeches because we posit that political speeches are an important mode of communication of politicians to citizens. However, citizens do not usually listen to an entire political speech. Therefore, chances of political speeches directly affecting their political attitudes are slim. Instead, there is a bigger possibility for citizens to be exposed to the news coverage of a political speech.

In terms of political attitudes, we believe that citizens' attitudes towards immigrants are an important focus because immigration is on the rise in many democratic countries (e.g., in Western Europe and North America [Rubio-Marin, 2000]). Simultaneously, studies on the treatment of immigration in the media show there are strong associations between immigration and negativity (e.g., crime and delinquency) but hardly any emphasis is placed to the contributions of immigration to their host countries (Coole, 2002; d'Haenens and de Lange, 2001; Gardikiotis, 2003; Igartua, Muñiz, and Cheng, 2005; ter Wal, d'Haenens, and Koeman, 2005; Van Gorp, 2005; Vliegthart and Roggeband, 2007).

Our study is the first which investigates the role of values as a moderator of effects of news frames and message sources in determining political attitudes. Findings from this study can provide an explanation as to why political information relayed through the media may affect citizens differently. On a larger

scale, this could potentially explain citizens' support or rejection of certain political arguments, or even manifestos of certain political parties.

## 2 The effect of news frames on political attitudes: Episodic vs. thematic

News frames refer to the highlighted aspects in news coverage of issues or events which cause citizens to base their views on them. According to Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley (1997), news frames shape the understanding and opinions of issues by stressing certain features of a controversy and reducing the complex issue into one or two central aspects.

Episodic and thematic frames are two fundamental types of frames in political news reporting (Gross, 2008; Iyengar, 1991). There has been evidence that these frames have the potential to influence people's opinions on political issues, which makes them highly relevant when addressing the main aim of this study.

According to Iyengar (1993), episodic frames depict public issues in terms of specific events and concrete instances (e.g., an unemployed worker). On television, episodically framed news is visually appealing and consists of live coverage on the scene (e.g., interview with an unemployed worker). On the other hand, thematically framed news focuses on political issues as well as events in broader contexts by presenting collective evidence (e.g., changes in the nature of employment opportunities).

Although news reports have gravitated towards these two types of frames (Iyengar, 1991), journalists have been said to heavily use episodic frames because they are believed to be more compelling. In fact, Iyengar (1993) found that television news coverage of political issues is mostly episodically framed. In line with this, Gross (2008) posits that the compelling nature of episodic news frames is essential because it may draw readers into the story.

Besides the nature of episodic and thematic frames, there are also studies which focused on their effect towards political attitudes (e.g., Aarøe, 2011; Gross, 2008; Iyengar, 1991). Iyengar (1991) conducted several studies which focused on how television frame political issues (crime, international terrorism, poverty, unemployment, and racial inequality). He found that both episodic and thematically framed news affected citizens' attribution of causal and treatment responsibility which affects their views towards policies. More specifically, citizens who were exposed to episodically framed news attributed individuals to be responsible for their own predicaments which attenuated support for

government programs that were meant to address these problems and shielded political leaders from their responsibility. The citizens were also unable to make connections between the social and political problems that were discussed in these studies. On the other hand, citizens exposed to thematically framed news selected societal attributions for the problems.

Besides attribution of responsibilities, more recent studies have found that episodic frames have stronger effects on peoples' attitudes due to their emotional appeal (Aarøe, 2011; Gross, 2008). Since most previous research posits that news coverage framed episodically is more compelling and emotionally engaging compared to that framed thematically, we predict the following:

[H1(a)] News coverage of a political speech framed episodically will have stronger effects on citizens' attitudes towards immigrants compared to news coverage of a political speech framed thematically.

### **3 The effect of message source on political attitudes: Domestic vs. foreign politician**

The relationship between message source and opinion is one that has been established in classical psychology studies dating back to World War II (Hovland and Weiss, 1951). In recent times, this topic is still researched to better understand citizens' political attitudes. More current studies have found that citizens tend to rely on the source of a political message to make judgments (Goren, Federico, and Kittilson, 2009; Kuklinski and Hurley, 1994).

The idea of a message source affecting political attitudes has also been researched by communication scholars in the context of media effects. What political elites say, and the manner in which news media report these actions, often exerts considerable effects upon citizens' opinion formation and policy evaluations (Druckman, 2001; Watts, Domke, Shah, and Fan, 1999; Zaller, 1992). According to Hartman and Weber (2009), the effect of the message source has been found to be more pronounced when it is perceived to hold a more similar political ideology with the citizens. We posit that this phenomenon is related to the notion of in-group versus out-group.

It is commonly understood that the sense of familiarity, attachment, and preference for certain characteristics displayed by a group may encourage the desire of a person to be a member of this group. Members within this group consider themselves as in-group, while others are considered as out-group. Once people have determined their group identification, it is expected for them

to establish traits and norms which distinguish their group from others (Wetherell and Turner, 1979). Based on this, we find it reasonable to posit that a domestic politician is considered more of an in-group to the citizens of his or her country compared to a foreign politician.

Generally, it is quite common for people to be more positively affected by messages from members of an in-group. However, scholars have acknowledged that in-group identification is independent of negative attitudes towards out-group (Brewer, 1999). Hence, there is a possibility for an out-group member's message to be held in high regard.

A political speech of an out-group politician can be met with a more positive response compared to one delivered by an in-group politician in certain situations. For instance, Budesheim, Houston and DePaola (1996) found that when it comes to negative political attacks, messages from in-group sources were scrutinized more systematically compared to out-group sources. They posit that a disliked in-group member is treated more harshly compared to an out-group member because citizens do not want the disliked in-group member's behavior to be a reflection of the entire group.

According to Allport (1954), people's boundaries could shift to be more or less inclusive depending on local conditions or individual needs. For example, a foreign politician speaking of his peoples' conditions in a host country may be perceived to be a more credible source compared to a domestic politician of that host country. This is because the foreign politician is able to communicate and empathize better with his people, thus making him a credible spokesperson for them. According to Lupia (2000), a credible source is someone who possesses knowledge about the relevant topic and can be trusted to reveal his or her knowledge.

In light of studying citizens' attitudes towards immigrants, we believe that a foreign politician from the immigrant group will be perceived to be a more credible speech source compared to a domestic politician when he or she is deemed to be more knowledgeable than the domestic politician in the topic discussed. Therefore, our prediction reads:

[H1(b)] News coverage of a political speech delivered by a foreign politician from an immigrant group will have stronger effects on citizens' attitudes towards immigrants compared to a political speech delivered by a domestic politician.

## 4 The moderating effect of values on political attitudes

Values are important constructs in peoples' lives which motivate actions and function as standards for judging as well as for justifying actions (Schwartz, 1994). They transcend into all aspects of peoples' lives (e.g., personal and professional life) and have also been found to affect political attitudes (Van Gyes and De Witte, 1999). An important theoretical framework which has been applied to studying the salience of values in affecting political attitudes is Schwartz's Basic Human Values (BHV) (e.g., Barnea and Schwartz, 1998; Davidov, Meuleman, Billiet, and Schmidt, 2008; Durietz, Luyten, Snauwaert, and Hutsebaur, 2002; Schwartz, 2007). In this framework, there are ten values (power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, and conformity)<sup>1</sup> (see Schwartz and Boehnke, 2004).

Over the years, studies applying the BHV have yielded findings which show directional associations between values and political attitudes. For instance, Barnea and Schwartz (1998) investigated the effect of values on voting centering on the Israeli 1998 elections. They found that peoples' value priorities predispose individuals to vote for particular political parties in response to their ideological symbols and messages. Among their various findings was that liberal and secular political parties were supported by citizens who regarded 'self-direction' as something of high importance but 'tradition' and 'conformity' as something of low importance.

In addition, Durietz et al. (2002) found that value orientations, alongside religiosity, are a strong predictor of political attitudes (e.g., economic conservatism and cultural conservatism). Among their findings was that economic conservatism and cultural conservatism were positively related to 'achievement' and 'power' but negatively to 'universalism' and 'benevolence'.

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<sup>1</sup> The definition for the ten values by Schwartz and Boehnke (2004): 'Power' refers to social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources. 'Achievement' refers to personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards. 'Hedonism' refers to pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself. 'Stimulation' refers to excitement, novelty and challenge in life. 'Self-direction' refers to independent thought and action – choosing, creating, exploring. 'Universalism' refers to understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature. 'Benevolence' refers to preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact. 'Tradition' refers to respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide. 'Conformity' refers to restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms. 'Security' refers to safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of oneself.

Besides understanding political attitudes in ‘local’ settings, the BHV has also been applied to study political attitudes in international contexts. Davidov et al. (2008) investigated the effects of the values from the self-transcendence and conservation dimensions on citizens’ attitudes towards immigration in 19 countries. They found that effects slightly differed across countries, but overall, ‘universalism’ and ‘benevolence’ were found to have a positive effect on support for immigration while values from the conservation dimension were found to have a negative effect on this issue.

Findings from these studies show that most, if not all, of the BHV values are politically relevant (Barnea and Schwartz, 1998). However, Rokeach (1979) singled out ‘freedom’ and ‘equality’ as the paramount political values. When looking at the definitions of the ten BHV values (see Schwartz and Boehnke, 2004), ‘freedom’ and ‘equality’ are highly related to ‘universalism’ (understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature). Rokeach’s claim has been supported by more recent studies (Waheed, Schuck, de Vreese, and Neijens, 2011; Waheed, Schuck, Neijens, and de Vreese, 2012), which found ‘universalism’ to be a particularly salient value in political speeches and their news coverage.

In Schwartz’s (2007) study, he investigated the extent to which ‘universalism’ is applied to all members of society (i.e., including members of out-groups such as foreigners and immigrants). He found that democratization of a country is one of the contributing factors to broad ‘moral inclusiveness’. This term refers to citizens’ perception that others are members of an out-group or an in-group. Societies which have broad ‘moral inclusiveness’ would perceive the value universalism to apply to everyone and not just to members of their in-group. More specifically, Schwartz was able to show that citizens with broad ‘moral inclusiveness’ extended ‘universalism’ to members of out-groups which resulted in positive perceptions toward immigration. Considering the salience of ‘universalism’ found in relation to politics and political attitudes in previous studies, our study will focus on the role of this value in determining citizens’ attitudes towards immigrants when exposed to different news frames and message sources in the media.

Previous scholars have conducted many studies to better understand the factors involved in the shaping of public opinion (e.g., source characteristics [Druckman, 2001]; interpersonal communication [Druckman and Nelson, 2003]). Besides individually testing the direct effect of media news frames, message source, and values on political attitudes, some scholars have also looked into various moderators that add to this. For instance, Shen and Edwards (2005) found that personal values moderated the effect of news frames on issue thought and attitudes. Considering the importance of values for citizens when



interpreting political information that they receive from the media, alongside the importance of news frames (Aarøe, 2011; Gross, 2008; Iyengar, 1991) and source effect (Goren, Federico, and Kittilson, 2009; Kuklinski and Hurley, 1994), we consider it important to test the interaction effect of these variables on attitudes towards immigrants.

For this reason, we extend the first two hypotheses (the direct effect of news frames and the speech sources) by combining them with the salience of the value universalism. Based on Schwartz and Boehnke's (2004) definition of 'universalism' and the findings of Schwartz's (2007) study, we deduce that citizens who place high importance on this value are broadminded and therefore more accepting towards members of an out-group (i.e., immigrants) compared to those who place low importance on this value. In the context of this study, this means that the effects of a foreign source will be stronger for citizens who place high importance on 'universalism' compared to citizens who place low importance on 'universalism' especially in the episodic condition. Because those who place high importance on 'universalism' are naturally accepting towards immigrants, this may heighten the level of credibility that they attach to the foreign politician, in particular when the source mentions concrete and compelling examples. Based on this reasoning, we predict the following:

[H2] The effect of political speech sources (foreign vs. domestic) on citizens' attitudes towards immigrants is moderated by the importance placed on 'universalism' such that those who score high on 'universalism' are more affected by a foreign source than those who score low on 'universalism', especially in the episodic condition.

## 5 Method

### 5.1 Design

To achieve the aim of this study, we conducted a 2 (news frame: episodic and thematic)  $\times$  2 (speech source: domestic vs. foreign politician) post-test only between-subjects survey experiment. This design resulted in four experimental conditions. Participants were assigned to one of the four conditions based on stratified random assignment.

### 5.2 Participants

For the experiment, a research company in the Netherlands recruited a total of 337 participants. 46.29% were males and 53.71% were females ranging from 18

to 64 years of age ( $M = 40.12$   $SD = 13.46$ ) with 12.17% ethnic minorities and 87.83% non ethnic minorities. Results from our analyses show that there were no significant differences found between the experimental groups for any of these demographics. These participants are members of the research company's web panel which are by and large representative of the national population sample. They were contacted via an online survey tool and were offered incentives for completing online questionnaires.

### 5.3 Procedure

First, all participants answered a pre-test questionnaire which contained questions used to retrieve their demographic information as well as to gauge the importance they place on the value 'universalism'. Next, participants read the stimulus material consisting of one news article in alternative versions establishing the different experimental conditions. Consequently, they received a post-test questionnaire which tested their attitudes towards immigrants. The study also included two manipulation check questions, one for each of the manipulations (frame and source).

### 5.4 Stimulus material

The stimulus material consisted of one news article for each of the conditions (see examples in the Appendix). Generally, the experimental conditions contained news coverage of a political speech delivered at an international event in the Netherlands. More specifically, the speech was about Filipino immigrants in the Netherlands and how the Dutch are encouraged to be open towards their cultural practices. This specific group and their cultural practices were chosen as the focus of the stimulus because they generally receive less media attention compared to other immigrant groups in the Netherlands. Therefore, our design was aimed towards minimizing any prejudices towards highly politicized immigrant groups. The main value advocated in the news coverage of the speech was 'universalism'.

In this experiment, we manipulated the news frame in how the news coverage of a political speech was reported as well as the speech source. The news coverage of the political speech was either framed episodically or thematically. In the episodic frame condition, the politician who delivers the speech makes references to his personal encounter with a Filipino seafarer. In the thematic frame condition, the politician does not mention a personal encounter. Instead, he speaks about Filipino immigrants and their cultural practices in more general terms.

We also manipulated the source of the political speech. The politician who delivered the speech reported in the news coverage was either from the Philippines or from the Netherlands. Since the experiment was carried out in the Netherlands, the Dutch politician is considered domestic, and the politician from the Philippines is considered foreign. As briefly mentioned earlier, the combination of the frame and source manipulation resulted in four experimental conditions (episodic domestic, episodic foreign, thematic domestic, and thematic foreign).

Everything else besides the news frame and the speech source was kept constant. Each news article consisted of six paragraphs which discussed the same contents in all experimental conditions (see examples in the Appendix). The experimental stimulus was created rather than selected for the purpose of this study. The people mentioned in the news coverage, the political speech, and the event of where the speech was supposedly presented are all fictitious. This was a precautionary step taken to minimize any bias which may occur if existing politicians, speeches, and events were used in the news coverage.

## 5.5 Manipulation check

There were two manipulation check questions in the post-test questionnaire. The first question was to test the news frame manipulation. The question asked: “In what manner did the politician who delivered the speech speak of his experience with the Filipinos?” Participants answered this question on a five-point scale with 1 indicating “personal manner” and 5 indicating “general manner”. Results from an independent sample *t*-test show a significant difference in the average response between the participants of the two frame conditions in the expected direction  $t(335) = -2.36, p < .05$ . Therefore, we consider the news frame manipulation successful.<sup>2</sup>

The second question was to test the speech source manipulation. The question asked: “Who was the person delivering the speech in the news article?” Participants could choose one of three options: a Dutch politician, a foreign politician, or unidentifiable. There was a significant difference between the answer options  $X^2(2, N = 337) = 103.96, p < .001$ . Overall, we also consider the speech source manipulation successful because a majority of the participants chose the correct answer.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The average answer for the participants in the episodic frame condition was  $M = 2.63, SD = 1.01$  and the average answer for those in the thematic frame condition was  $M = 2.89, SD = 1.03$ .

<sup>3</sup> 59.64% chose the correct answer, 13.35% chose the wrong answer, and 27.00% chose the ‘unidentifiable’ answer option.

## 6 Measures

**Attitudes towards immigrants.** To assess attitudes towards immigrants (Filipino immigrants in the Netherlands), participants were asked to answer the following three questions: 1. what is your opinion toward Filipino immigrants?; 2. what do you think of immigrants?; and 3. what do you think of cultural practices of immigrants? The questions were answered using a 7-point scale with higher scores indicating higher support for immigrants and vice versa.<sup>4</sup> The reliability for these questions was high (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .85$ ,  $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ).

**Importance of 'universalism'.** The moderating variable in this study is the importance that participants place on the value universalism. Adapted from Schwartz and Bardi (2001), the importance of 'universalism' was measured in the pre-test questionnaire using a 9-point scale with higher scores indicating higher importance of the value and vice versa ("Please indicate how important 'seeking social justice and tolerance for all' is as a guiding principal in your life";  $M = 7.51$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ).

## 7 Results

### 7.1 Effect of news frames

*H1(a)* predicted that news coverage of a political speech framed episodically will have stronger effects on citizens' attitudes towards immigrants compared to news coverage of a political speech framed thematically. Results from a regression analysis show that news frames were not a significant predictor for attitudes towards immigrants,  $\beta = .054$ ,  $t(335) = .431$ ,  $p > .05$ .<sup>5</sup> This means that the episodically framed news did not have a stronger effect on citizens' attitudes towards immigrants compared to the thematically framed news. In other words, citizens exposed to news coverage of a political speech framed episodically did not have more positive attitudes towards immigrants compared to when they were exposed to news coverage of a political speech delivered thematically. Overall, *H1(a)* is not supported.

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<sup>4</sup> The first question was answered using a different scale compared to the second and third questions. The scale used to answer the first question was: 1 = dislike very much and 7 = like very much. The scale used to answer the second and third questions was: 1 = extremely negative, 7 = extremely positive. The results of our analyses point in the same direction when the different scales were used individually.

<sup>5</sup> Since the hypotheses are directional, all results reported are 1-tailed.

**Table 1:** Regression analysis for the 3-way interaction effect between source, frame, and ‘universalism’.

Interaction terms/Independent variables	$\beta$	$t$
source $\times$ frame $\times$ value	.64*	2.21
frame $\times$ value	-.63	-1.46
source $\times$ value	-.54	-1.41
source $\times$ frame	-.56	-1.95
universalism	.428***	4.44
source	.60	1.60
frame	.61	1.43

Source: 0 = foreign, 1 = local; frame: 0 = thematic, 1 = episodic \* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

## 7.2 Effect of speech source

$H1(b)$  predicted that a political speech delivered by a foreign politician from an immigrant group will have stronger effects on citizens’ attitudes towards immigrants compared to a political speech delivered by a domestic politician. Results from a regression analysis show that speech source was a significant predictor for attitudes towards immigrants,  $\beta = .104$ ,  $t(335) = 1.92$ ,  $p < .05$ . This means that the political speech delivered by a foreign politician from the immigrant group did have a stronger effect on citizens’ attitudes towards immigrants compared to the political speech delivered by a domestic politician. In other words, citizens exposed to news coverage of a political speech delivered by a foreign politician from the immigrant group had more positive attitudes towards immigrants compared to those exposed to news coverage of a political speech delivered by a domestic politician. Overall,  $H1(b)$  is supported.

## 7.3 Interaction effect

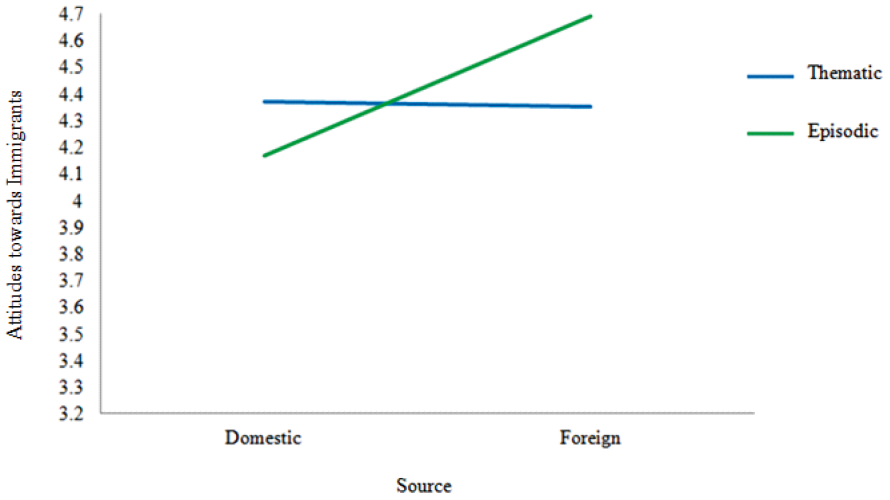
$H2$  predicted that the effect of political speech sources (foreign vs. domestic) on citizens’ attitudes towards immigrants is moderated by the importance placed on ‘universalism’ such that those who score high on ‘universalism’ are more affected by a foreign source than those who score low on ‘universalism’, especially in the episodic condition. Results from a regression analysis found a significant three-way interaction effect between news frames, message sources, and importance placed on ‘universalism’ on attitudes towards immigrants,

**Table 2:** Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of citizens' attitudes towards immigrants for each experimental condition when the importance placed on 'universalism' was high or low.

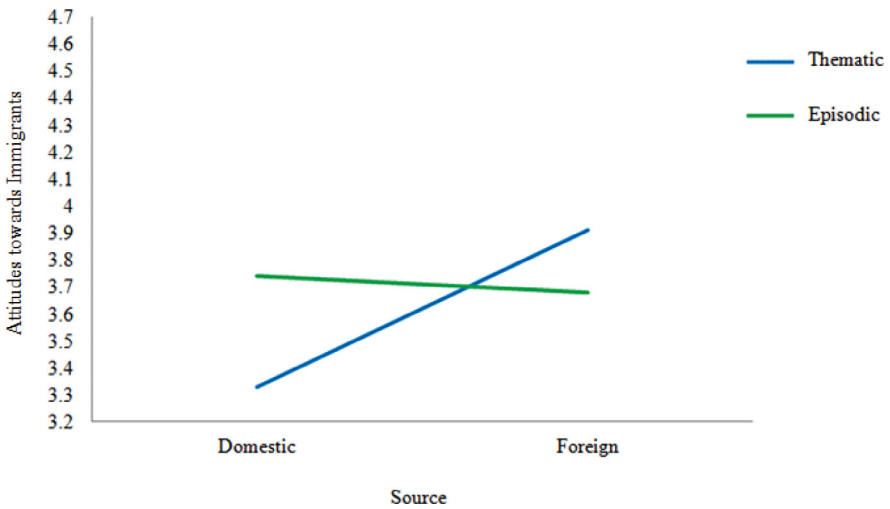
Universalism	Domestic source <i>M(SD)</i>		Foreign source <i>M(SD)</i>	
	Low	High	Low	High
Episodic frame	<i>N</i> = 38 3.74 <sup>a</sup> (.77)	<i>N</i> = 43 4.17 <sup>b</sup> (1.36)	<i>N</i> = 37 3.68 <sup>w</sup> (1.08)	<i>N</i> = 48 4.69 <sup>x</sup> (.92)
Thematic frame	<i>N</i> = 33 3.33 <sup>y</sup> (.98)	<i>N</i> = 49 4.37 <sup>z</sup> (1.19)	<i>N</i> = 39 3.91 <sup>c</sup> (1.04)	<i>N</i> = 50 4.35 <sup>d</sup> (1.05)

*Note:* The high and low level for 'universalism' groups were obtained by conducting a mean split. Mean for importance of universalism is: 7.51. Citizens who placed the importance of 'universalism' > 7.51 were grouped into the high importance group while those who placed the importance of 'universalism' < 7.51 were grouped into the low importance group. Independent sample *t*-tests were conducted to test the differences in citizens' attitude towards immigrants between those who placed high and low importance on 'universalism' in each experimental condition. Values with the different pairings of superscripts indicate significant differences in each experimental conditions between high and low importance placed on 'universalism'. For instance, <sup>c</sup> and <sup>d</sup> show that there is a significant difference in citizens' attitude towards immigrants in the thematically framed news with a foreign political source condition between those who placed high and low importance on 'universalism'. Superscripts <sup>a, b</sup> and <sup>c, d</sup> indicate significant differences at  $p < .05$  (1-tailed) while superscripts <sup>w, x</sup> and <sup>y, z</sup> indicate significant differences at  $p < .001$ .

$\beta = .64$ ,  $t(336) = 2.21$ ,  $p < .05$  (see Table 1). This means that the effect of media news frames and political speech sources on attitudes towards immigrants were indeed moderated by the importance placed on 'universalism'. As can be seen from Table 2, those who scored high on 'universalism' are more affected by a foreign source in an episodic news frame, compared to those scoring low on 'universalism', in a thematic news frame. On the other hand, in a thematic news frame, the difference between citizens scoring high and low on universalism is found for the domestic source.



**Figure 1:** Effects of domestic and foreign source and episodic and thematic news frames on attitudes towards immigrants when levels of ‘universalism’ are high.



**Figure 2:** Effects of domestic and foreign source and episodic and thematic news frames on attitudes towards immigrants when levels of ‘universalism’ are low.

## 8 Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which values play a role as a moderator in determining citizens' political attitudes when exposed to different news frames and message sources in the media. More specifically, we tested the effects on citizens' attitudes towards immigrants when the news coverage of a political speech was framed episodically or thematically, when the speech source was foreign or domestic, and when citizens placed different levels of importance on 'universalism'.

A crucial finding in this study was that the effect of speech source was moderated by political values: Citizens who have a high level of 'universalism' were more affected by a foreign source compared to a domestic source in the episodic news frame condition than citizens who have a lower level of 'universalism'. In the thematic news frame condition, the biggest difference between the two value groups was found for the domestic source.

This finding implies the following: First, values ('universalism', more specifically) are important moderators of message sources when predicting political attitudes. On a larger scale, this means that values do guide citizens' interpretation of political information received from the media. This supports Shen and Edwards (2005) who found that the information relayed on the media does not have the same impact on all citizens due to their differing personal values. Second, this also supports the claim made by Rokeach (1979) and the findings of Waheed et al. (2011) and Waheed et al. (2012) that 'universalism' is indeed a salient value with important political ramifications.

Our study also found a direct effect of speech sources on citizens' attitudes towards immigrants. More specifically, we found that citizens exposed to news coverage of a political speech delivered by a foreign politician from the immigrant group had a more positive attitude towards immigrants compared to those who were exposed to news coverage of a political speech delivered by a domestic politician. The citizens in this study accepted the message of the foreign politician discussing the cultural practices of his countrymen living abroad better, as was also found in the study of Budesheim et al. (1996). This adds to the types of conditions under which citizens react more positively towards an out-group compared to an in-group. Also, our finding supports the claim of Allport (1954) who stated that people's boundaries could shift to be more or less inclusive depending on local conditions or individual needs. We believe that citizens were more inclusive towards the out-group because the foreign politician from the immigrant group was perceived to be more credible compared to the domestic politician to speak on the importance of maintaining cultural practices of his countrymen living abroad. Based on Schwartz's (2007)



study, our findings imply that the Netherlands are a highly democratized country where its citizens have broad moral inclusiveness. Therefore, those who placed high importance on 'universalism' were willing to extend this value to a foreign politician, who is a member of an out-group.

On the other hand, our results did not find a direct effect of news frames on citizens' attitudes towards immigrants. This means that citizens who were exposed to news coverage of a political speech framed episodically did not have a more positive attitude towards immigrants compared to those exposed to news coverage of a political speech framed thematically. This does not support the findings from previous scholars such as Aarøe (2011), Iyengar (1991, 1993), and Gross (2008). There could be various reasons to explain the discrepancy in findings which include the different focus on issues which were communicated to participants through different methods. Aarøe's (2011) study focused on a contested Danish law which was presented to the participants through extracts of debates. Meanwhile, Iyengar's (1991, 1993) studies focused on social problems presented on television news and Gross' study focused on crime which was presented to participants in opinion columns. Another explanation could be that the objectives of previous studies were different from this study's. Gross' (2008) study investigated the effect of news frames on opinions when mediated by emotion. Meanwhile, Aarøe's (2011) study investigated the role of citizens' emotional reaction to explain frame strength and Iyengar's (1991, 1993) studies investigated people's attribution of responsibility when exposed to different news frames.

Generally, this study has contributed to the existing knowledge on the role of values in guiding citizens' opinion formation through the political information that they receive from the media. More specifically, it is one of the first studies to investigate the role of values as a moderator of differently framed news and different message sources in determining citizens' political attitudes. This adds to the list of previous studies which investigated the moderated effects of social and individual factors towards political attitudes (e.g., Druckman, 2001; Druckman and Nelson, 2003; Shen and Edwards, 2005). Beyond this, it also aids in explaining why political information relayed through the media has different effects among citizens, which, in the long run, may lead some citizens to support or reject certain political arguments and manifestos of certain political parties.

Regarding issues, this study has contributed to the understanding of citizens' attitudes towards immigrants. We found that messages from an elite out-group source can lead the other members of his/her group to be viewed positively under certain circumstances. This could be a stepping stone to under-

standing how to generate more positive attitudes towards immigrants among citizens of host countries.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the results of this study. First, in the Netherlands, local politicians differ in their attitudes towards immigrants which may cause variations regarding who citizens would consider as in-group or out-group. This means we cannot be sure that all Dutch citizens would consider the Filipinos as out-group. Future studies should include pre-test questions to check for citizens' attitudes towards the Filipino immigrants in the Netherlands. Second, as previously mentioned, the Filipinos receive less media attention compared to some other immigrant groups in the Netherlands. Thus, our findings may not apply to all immigrant groups in this country. To remedy this, different immigrant groups could be used in an experiment to test citizens' attitudes towards immigrants.

Third, we hypothesized that members of an out-group can be perceived as more credible depending on the speech topic discussed, but we did not measure source credibility as a dependent variable in this study. In the future, it would be beneficial to include this as a dependent variable in order to determine whether or not source credibility contributed to the effects.

Fourth, the news coverage of the political speech only contained the value universalism. Perhaps there would be different outcomes if antagonistic values (e.g., conformity or achievement) were advocated in the news coverage of a political speech discussing the cultural practices of Filipino immigrants in the Netherlands. In the future, experiments using the same topic advocating different values could be conducted to test citizens' attitudes towards immigrants.

Fifth, we tried to make a distinction between episodically and thematically framed news in the experiment stimulus. However, these two types of frames are hardly mutually exclusive in everyday news coverage. Journalists usually use a combination of the two and/or other types of frames. In the future, the effects of a combination of frames should be tested. Finally, the topic of the political speech used in this study was rather uncontroversial (i.e., the importance of maintaining Filipino cultural practices for those who are immigrants abroad). There is a possibility for citizens to react differently if a more controversial topic was discussed in the speech (e.g., allowing for the call for prayer to be announced on the loudspeakers of mosques five times a day in non-Muslim countries). Consequently, future experiments could use different topics with different levels of controversy to test citizens' attitudes towards immigrants.

Notwithstanding these limitations, we believe that our findings have given a better insight into the salience of values as a moderator in citizens' interpretation of political information received from the media. This contributes to our

understanding of the influencing factors that shape public opinion which establishes the political climate of democratic societies. In terms of topic expansion, it would be fruitful to investigate the extent to which the other nine values in the BHV affect citizens' political attitudes when exposed to different political speech sources and media news frames. There is reason to believe that there may be discrepancies in the findings between these values because, according to Schwartz and Boehnke (2004), values in the four dimensions have different motivational goals. Furthermore, since the BHV has been found to be suitable for cross-cultural samples (Schwartz, 1992, 1994; Sagiv and Schwartz, 1995), we could replicate this study in other countries in different parts of the world where they have contrasting political systems and citizens of diverse ethnicities. By this, we could potentially discover the details of the influencing factors affecting public opinion.

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## Appendix

### Episodic, domestic

#### van Dijk: “Turning Mr. Ramos and his family from strangers to friends”

THE HAGUE – “I like many things about the Netherlands, but I often miss my Filipino culture – I miss the people, the food, the festivities, the color.” These were the words expressed by Mr. Apolinario Ramos, a Filipino seafarer, to Mr. Remco van Dijk, the Head of International Consuls in The Netherlands during their recent encounter at the Rotterdam Port Authority Open Day.

Mr. Ramos’ story was shared by Mr. van Dijk at the International Consulate Day which he officiates annually with an opening speech. Mr. Ramos’ story was particularly heartfelt as the country of focus this year was the Philippines. Festive Filipino decorations covered the walls of the event hall and traditional Filipino foods were served. There was also a display of their traditional costumes and art.

“We in the Netherlands are very much open to foreign cultures”, said Mr. van Dijk in his speech. He stressed that openness is the key to fostering stronger relationships among trading nations. “This is why getting to know the immigrants in the Netherlands, such as the Filipinos, is crucial.”

It has been reported that to date, there are 150 Dutch companies in the Philippines and, correspondingly, the Philippines have been supplying manpower services for the Netherlands specifically as seafarers and nurses. As the economies in both countries expand, so has the number of Filipino migrants in the Netherlands.

Mr. Ramos and his family moved to the Netherlands 13 years ago. Like many immigrants, they are comfortable here, but Mr. Ramos fears that his five children will grow up knowing little of their heritage. Mr. van Dijk notes that this could indeed be a huge problem. “Imagine a Dutch person abroad not understanding the symbolism of wearing orange during Queen’s Day or at football matches. That would be a real shame!”, he said.

To remedy this problem, Mr. van Dijk proposed that important Filipino holidays should be acknowledged in Dutch schools. Teachers, together with Filipino students, should hold interactive presentations. “Holidays which commemorate Filipino local heroes such as Bonifacio Day and Rizal Day are important in the Philippines, comparable to our Dutch Queen’s Day. Seeing how the longevity of culture depends on the future generation, the children of Mr. Ramos should be educated on these matters and in turn teach their peers about them.” Mr. van Dijk ended his speech by saying, “it is these types of seemingly small gestures that can turn immigrants like Mr. Ramos and his family from strangers to friends”.

## Thematic foreign

### Cimafranca: “From strangers to friends”

THE HAGUE – “Immigration has long been an issue heavily publicized in the Netherlands, but not all immigrant groups have received equal attention”, said Mr. Frank Cimafranca, the Minister and Consul General of the Philippines in his opening speech at the International Consulate Day.

Every year, this event appoints a country of focus. This year, it was the Philippines. Mr. Cimafranca noted that discussions on the Filipino community living in the Netherlands have rarely been the highlight of immigration discussions. Therefore, it would be beneficial to learn more of this immigrant community in the Netherlands. As a tribute to the Filipinos, festive Filipino decorations covered the walls of the event hall and traditional Filipino foods were served. There was also a display of their traditional costumes and art.

“The Dutch are very much open to foreign cultures”, said Mr. Cimafranca in his speech. He stressed that openness is the key to fostering stronger rela-

tionships among trading nations. “This is why getting to know the internationals in the Netherlands, such as the Filipinos, is crucial.”

It has been reported that to date, there are 150 Dutch companies in the Philippines and, correspondingly, the Philippines have been supplying manpower services for the Netherlands specifically as seafarers and nurses. As the economies in both countries expand, so has the number of Filipino migrants in the Netherlands.

“According to our research, most Filipinos in the Netherlands are comfortable living in The Netherlands, but they are concerned that their children will grow up knowing little of their heritage. Mr. Cimafranca notes that this could indeed be a huge problem. “Imagine a Dutch person abroad not understanding the symbolism of wearing orange during Queen’s Day or at football matches. That would be a real shame!”, he said.

To remedy this problem, Mr. Cimafranca proposed that important Filipino holidays should be acknowledged in Dutch schools. Teachers, together with Filipino students, should hold interactive presentations. “Holidays which commemorate Filipino local heroes such as Bonifacio Day and Rizal Day are important in the Philippines, comparable to the Dutch Queen’s Day. Seeing how the longevity of culture depends on the future generation, the Filipino children living in the Netherlands should be educated on these matters and in turn teach their peers about them.” Mr. Cimafranca ended his speech by saying, “it is these types of seemingly small gestures that can turn immigrants in the Netherlands from strangers to friends”.

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