Registered report:

Can emotions explain how threat rhetoric shapes preferences for freedom versus security?

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Motivation

- Threat rhetoric shapes political preference formation [Balzacq et al., 2016; McDonald, 2008]
- . . . towards more security [Davis and Silver, 2004; Huddy et al., 2005]

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$\rightarrow$ the link of threat and security is questioned [Marcus, 2021; Marcus et al., 2019; Mondak and Hurwitz, 2012]

Argument

- We argue that emotions may act as a mediator
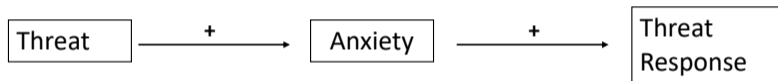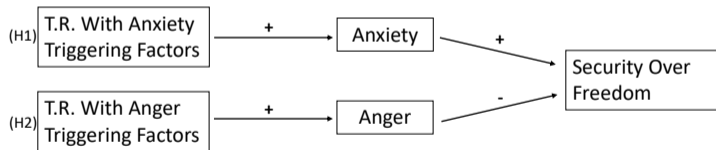
Anxiety as *the* mediating emotion

Figure 1: Based on the "standard view"[Marcus, 2021]

Extension through Anger

- Mediating emotions: Anxiety & Anger
- Emotions linked to appraisal dimensions, contextual triggers
  [Frijda et al., 1989; Smith and Ellsworth, 1985]
- Appraisal Theory [Lazarus, 1991], Affective Intelligence Theory [Marcus et al., 2000]

Figure 2: Particularized theoretical model

Hypotheses

- H1: When a threat is described with triggering factors presumed as *anxiety drivers*, citizens' preferences are directed to security over freedom via mediation through anxiety.

- H2: When a threat is described with triggering factors presumed as *anger drivers*, citizens' preferences are directed away from security in the direction of freedom, via mediation through anger.
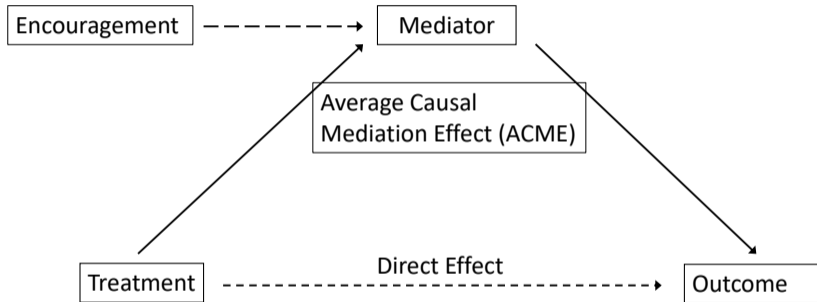
Empirical strategy

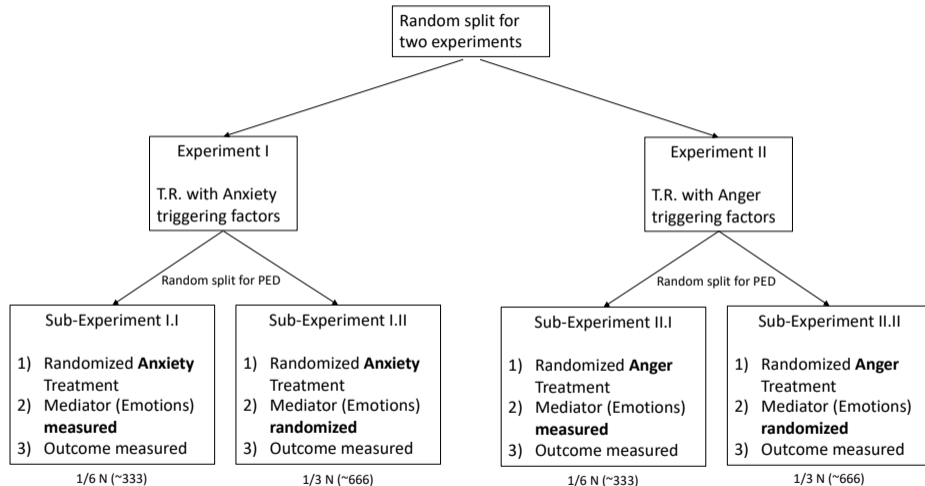Support for smart borders as a European immigration policy

- Threat rhetoric is becoming increasingly linked to the topic of migration [Bourbeau, 2011]
- Immigration elicits strong emotions
- No prior attitudes since policy is unknown $\rightarrow$ Policy preference formation

Figure 3: Elements of the parallel encouragement design [Imai et al., 2013]

Research design: Parallel Encouragement Design

Random split for two experiments

Experiment I — T.R. with Anxiety triggering factors

Experiment II — T.R. with Anger triggering factors

Random split for PED

Sub-Experiment I.I
1) Randomized **Anxiety** Treatment
2) Mediator (Emotions) **measured**
3) Outcome measured

1/6 N (~333)

Sub-Experiment I.II
1) Randomized **Anxiety** Treatment
2) Mediator (Emotions) **randomized**
3) Outcome measured

1/3 N (~666)

Sub-Experiment II.I
1) Randomized **Anger** Treatment
2) Mediator (Emotions) **measured**
3) Outcome measured

1/6 N (~333)

Sub-Experiment II.II
1) Randomized **Anger** Treatment
2) Mediator (Emotions) **randomized**
3) Outcome measured

1/3 N (~666)

Experimental manipulations

Treatment: Speech German Bundestag

1. Fact sheet: Smart Borders

2. Speech excerpt (random allocation)
   - Immigration threat + anxiety trigger
   - Immigration threat + anger trigger
   - - (Control)

Mediator: (topic-independent) Emotions
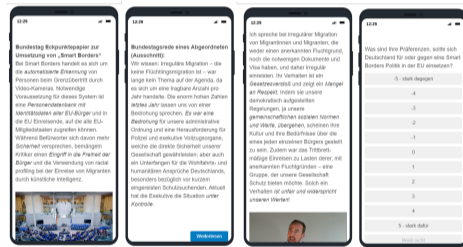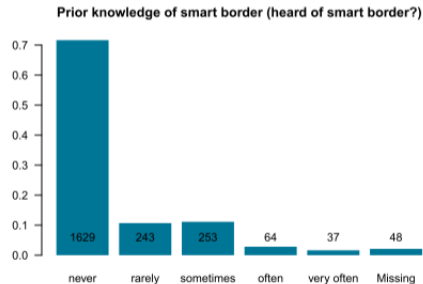
- AEMT
  - Anxiety
  - Anger
  - No emotion (Control)

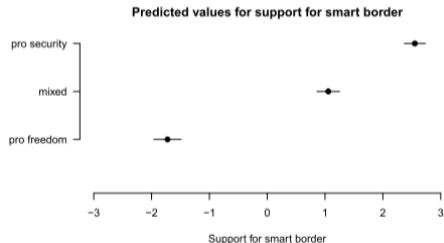**Figure 4:** Treatment on mobile phone.

- ✓ Smart borders is an unknown topic
- ✓ Smart borders preferences linked to freedom/security
- ✓ Treatments arouse different emotions
- ✓ Treatments are read and understood
- ✓ Sufficient power based on pre-stud effect sizes

Prior knowledge of smart border (heard of smart border?)

- ✓ Smart borders is an unknown topic
- ✓ Smart borders preferences linked to freedom/security
- ✓ Treatments arouse different emotions
- ✓ Treatments are read and understood
- ✓ Sufficient power based on pre-stud effect sizes

Predicted values for support for smart border

- ✓ Smart borders is an unknown topic
- ✓ Smart borders preferences linked to freedom/security
- ✓ Treatments arouse different emotions
- ✓ Treatments are read and understood
- ✓ Sufficient power based on pre-stud effect sizes

Table A.3: Effect of the treatment on anxiety and anger.

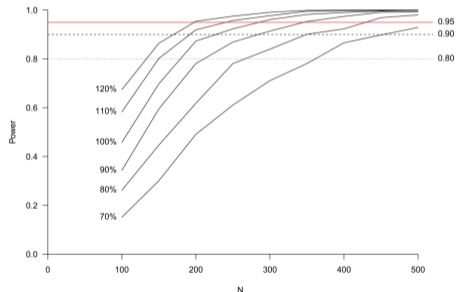|	Dependent variable:	
	Anxiety present	Anger present
	logistic	logistic
Treatment Anger	0.585	1.592***
	(0.357)	(0.459)
Treatment Anxiety	0.735**	1.047***
	(0.338)	(0.363)
Observations	265	264
Log Likelihood	−146.098	−119.919
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

- ✓ Smart borders is an unknown topic
- ✓ Smart borders preferences linked to freedom/security
- ✓ Treatments arouse different emotions
- ✓ Treatments are read and understood
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Conclusion

- Can emotions explain how threat rhetoric shapes preferences for freedom versus security?

- Disentangle the mediating role of emotions anger and anxiety
- Application of the parallel encouragement design [Imai et al., 2013]

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Appendix

Treatment dimensions

Table 1: Dimensions used in the treatment.

	Anger	Anxiety/fear
Uncertainty	Controlled setting	Uncertain setting
Coping	Feeling that I/the state has the situation under control	Not under control
Understanding	Tangible	Not tangible; hard to grasp
Newness	Usual situation	Unusual / new situation
Direction	Directional; to the outside	Non-directional; self-direction
Norm	Norm violation	No norm violation (or no strong one); No relevant aspect
Justice	Injustice	No relevant aspect
Grievance	Grievance	Grievance
Time	Past	Present/Future

Treatment design: Fact sheet

The following is a summary of a key issues paper
from the Bundestag. A key issues paper provides a
general introduction or overview to a topic under
discussion in the Bundestag. [new slide] Smart
Borders is the *automated detection* of persons
crossing the border by video cameras. A necessary
prerequisite for this system is a *personal database
containing identity data of all EU citizens* and people
entering the EU, which can be accessed by all EU
member states. While supporters expect more
security from this, critics criticize it as an
encroachment on citizens' freedom and the use of
racial profiling in the entry of migrants by artificial
intelligence. [Picture]

© Deutscher Bundestag / Thomas Trutschel / photothek

Treatment design: Speech: Anxiety

Now follows a recording from a speech in the Bundestag. Please read the excerpt carefully. [New slide] Bundestag Speech by a Member of Parliament (excerpt): We know: Irregular migration—which is not refugee migration—was not an issue on the agenda for a long time, because it was a sustainable number per year. The suddenly enormous numbers expected for *this year* make us talk about a threat. It *will be a new threat* for our administrative order and a protracted challenge for police and executive law enforcement bodies protecting the direct security of our society. But probably also an undertaking for the welfare and humanitarian claims of Germany, especially with regard to recently arrived protection seekers. It is possible that the executive branch does not have the *chaos under control.* [New slide] The reception capacities of the EU countries will *probably* be completely exhausted in the course of the year, thus putting border controls, initial reception facilities and foreigners offices into a *chaotic uncontrollable permanent state*. This would result in a new dimension of *continuous insecurity*. For newly arrived refugees, the insecurities could have a noticeable impact in restrictions on welfare benefits. But for society as a whole, such a crisis situation would also entail a change in everyday life. Citizens would have to live more cautiously and prudently every day and be prepared for all eventualities. [Picture]

Treatment design: Speech: Anger

Now follows a recording from a speech in the Bundestag. Please read the excerpt carefully. [New slide]
Bundestag Speech by a Member of Parliament (excerpt): We know: Irregular migration - which is not
refugee migration - was not an issue on the agenda for a long time, because it was a sustainable
number per year. The enormously high numbers *last year* make us talk about a threat. *it was a threat*
for our administrative order and a challenge for police and executive law enforcement bodies, which
ensure the direct security of our society; but also an undertaking for the welfare and humanitarian
claims of Germany, especially regarding recently arrived protection seekers. Currently, the executive
branch has the situation *under control.* [New slide] By irregular migration, I am referring to migrants
who have neither a recognized reason for fleeing nor the necessary documents and visas, and therefore
entered irregularly. Their behavior is a *breach of law* and shows a *lack of respect.* By overriding our
democratically established regulations, indeed our *community social norms and values,* their culture
and needs seem to take precedence over those of any individual citizen. Moreover, the freeloading
entry was to the detriment of those with recognized reasons for fleeing — a group to which our society
wishes to provide protection. Such behavior *is unfair and contradicts our values*! [Picture]

Treatment design: Pictures, Source: Küntzler 2021; Face ++
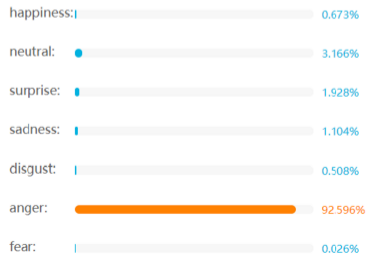
## Operationalisation: Outcome variable

What are your preferences, should Germany advocate for or against a Smart Borders policy in the EU?

- 11-point answering scale

There are many arguments for or against a Smart Border policy. Please rank the following arguments in order of importance to you personally.

- random order, non-comprehensive selection of arguments based on the qualitative study by Lehtonen and Aalto (2017)
  - Data retention is too great an intrusion into the privacy of the individual [Freedom]
  - Growing database provides incentive for unwarranted surveillance by governments [Freedom]
  - EU should stand against dehumanization by data and algorithms and for freedom. [Freedom]
  - Data retention is justified because of the risks at the borders, which are reduced. [Security]
  - Growing database provides additional tool for state crime-fighting efforts. [Security]
  - EU should stand for border security through technological solutions. [Security]
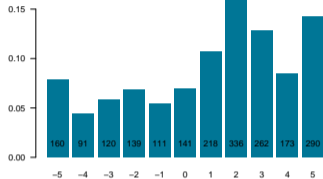
Power analysis for the Average causal mediation effect
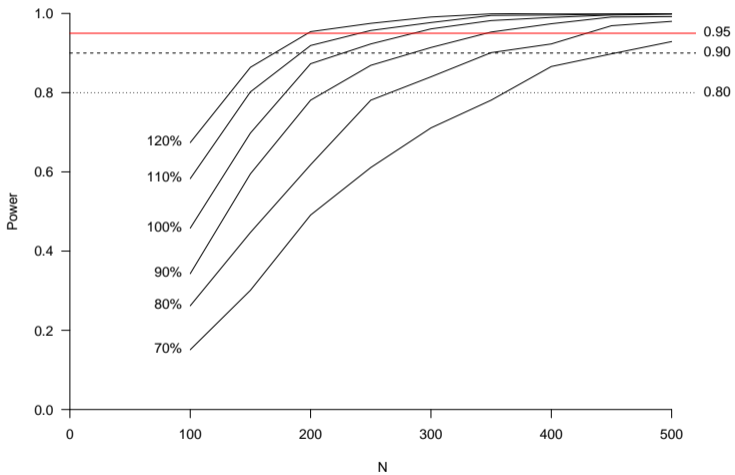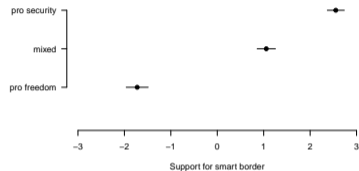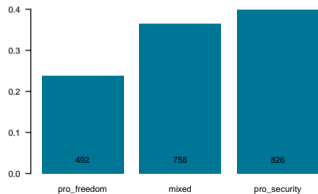
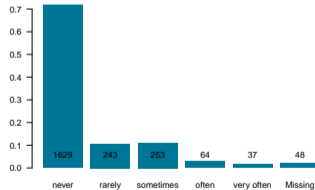# Pre-study 1

DV1: Support for smart border policy

Predicted values for support for smart border

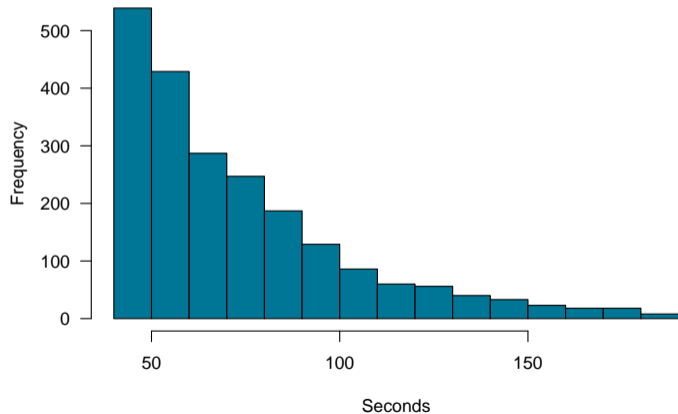DV2: Ranking of arguments for smart border policy, top 2 reasons

Prior knowledge of smart border (heard of smart border?)

Reading time newspaper article (<.95 quantile)

Pre-study 2

Table A.3: Effect of the treatment on anxiety and anger.

	Dependent variable:	
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	logistic	*logistic*
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