

When Do Anti-Prejudice Norms Change? Mainstream Party Accommodation of Far-Right Rhetoric

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Ali Karcic

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1 Abstract

While much existing research concerning democratic norm breakdown focuses on the conduct of far-right parties, especially regarding the norm of anti-prejudice, the main argument advanced in this article is that mainstream parties are in fact more important in shaping citizen norm perception. We know that center-left and center-right parties occasionally accommodate far-right parties for various reasons, but we do not know the long-term consequences of such accommodation, beyond the electoral and policy arenas. This article shows that when centrist/mainstream parties accommodate far-right parties by adopting their rhetoric, they diminish the perceived pervasiveness of anti-prejudice norms among citizens to a greater extent. This is because mainstream parties, unlike fringe, outsider parties, possess greater normative legitimacy and credibility by virtue of their status as representatives of society as a whole, thus wielding considerable influence over public perception of what constitutes socially acceptable behavior. Consequently, when mainstream parties engage in accommodative strategies toward far-right parties, they can substantially weaken the perception of anti-prejudice norms. Theoretically, I contribute to the extant literature by exploring the broader, normative implications of mainstream parties' accommodation of prejudiced rhetoric. Empirically, I aim to test my hypotheses through a representative sample of 2200 respondents in Germany.

2 Introduction

In recent years, much attention has been focused on the alleged erosion of democratic norms, including among others, the norm of anti-prejudice. The question of whether anti-prejudice norms are eroding has facilitated not only renewed scholarly interest ([Bursztyn, Egorov and Fiorin, 2020](#); [Newman et al., 2021](#); [Ekholm, Bäck and Renström, 2022](#)), but already generated a number of political initiatives at the EU level, with the purpose of combating xenophobia, hate speech and mistreatment of minorities ([EU, N.d.](#)). The weakening of norms of anti-prejudice is worrying, given its inconsistency with long-established traditions of anti-prejudice, tolerance and civility that have characterized liberal democracies in the West ([Mendelberg, 2001](#); [Ivarsflaten,](#)

Blinder and Ford, 2010). The norm of anti-prejudice constitutes an important element of pluralist democracy, and yet it appears to have gradually grown weaker. Why is this the case?

One possible cause behind the erosion of these social norms has been speculated to lie within the political sphere, more specifically with the rise of far-right parties (Valentim, 2021; Ekholm, Bäck and Renström, 2022). Most research on norm breakdown has indeed focused on the conduct of far-right parties whose rhetoric very clearly has broken with norms of anti-prejudice, and pushed the boundaries of what is considered acceptable public speech. However, support for far-right parties and their prejudiced rhetoric has fluctuated throughout time, and it is thereby puzzling why norms of anti-prejudice are seemingly weakening only recently. As such, far-right parties cannot be the sole cause of anti-prejudice norm erosion.

Whereas far-right, populist, parties have been the focal point for studies of prejudiced rhetoric in the wider literature for decades, substantially less scholarly attention has been devoted to examining the ability of established, centrist, mainstream parties to influence the norm environment, despite the fact that center-left and center-right parties are the most powerful and most influential parties in virtually all Western European countries. We know that mainstream parties sometimes accommodate far-right parties due to strategic considerations, with these strategies having well-studied effects in the electoral and policy arenas (Meguid, 2005). However, we know less about the wider social consequences of such accommodation strategies, especially with regards to social norm perception among citizens. In other words, we do not know what, if any, role centrist party accommodation of far-right party rhetoric plays in changing citizens' perception of anti-prejudice norms. Put differently, does centrist party accommodation of far-right rhetoric change citizens' perception of the anti-prejudice norm more, compared to far-right parties?

This research article aims to contribute to the existing literature by focusing on the role of established, centrist, mainstream parties, as opposed to far-right parties, in shaping norm perceptions on the individual level, specifically in regard to the anti-prejudice norm. The core argument of the article is that when mainstream parties at the center of the political spectrum accommodate far-right parties by adopting their prejudiced rhetoric, they shift norm perceptions among citizens, making citizens more likely to view the anti-prejudice norm as less pervasive. I claim that the ability of political parties to alter the public perception of norms depends on to what extent they are seen as legitimate and credible representatives of what constitutes socially acceptable behavior in society. Political parties that are ideologically centrist, have a long history of government participation, and are supported by a large number of other political elites, are in a much better position to change public perception, because they have a larger degree of normative legitimacy and credibility, given their status as representatives of not only the political system, but society as a whole. This means that mainstream, centrist parties can potentially weaken anti-prejudice norms to a much greater extent than far-right parties, given the latter's frequent status as fringe, outsider parties.

I make three significant contributions to the existing literature. Firstly, I contribute to the literature concerned with the consequences of mainstream party accommodation of far-right parties. Empirical evidence for the consequences of accommodation has been ambiguous, pointing in dif-

ferent directions depending on temporal and geographic context – by examining the consequences of accommodation on citizen norm perception, I go beyond the presently narrow focus on only policy output and electoral performance.

Secondly, I contribute to the literature on anti-prejudice norms by investigating the ability of political elites to change citizens’ perceptions of what kind of speech is considered acceptable in public. I introduce the concept of normative legitimacy and credibility as a novel explanation for why some political elites are better at influencing anti-prejudice norms, compared to others. In this way, I attempt to address the existing lacuna in prejudice research regarding the relationship between elites and prejudice (Paluck et al., 2021; Cramer, 2020).

Thirdly, I empirically contribute to a literature predominantly focused on an American context, by extending the scope to a European context. The dynamics of prejudice, as pertaining to the role of political elites and the influence of social norms, can be expected to differ substantially between the US and Western Europe, given that European democracies are mostly multiparty, parliamentary systems, and given the relative uniqueness of American anti-prejudice norms, in light of historic race relations. I do this by conducting a survey experiment on a nationally representative sample of 2200 respondents in Germany.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Party Competition

Political scientists have developed sophisticated theories explaining when and why radical right parties succeed in the electoral arena and, more importantly, how mainstream parties react to the emergence of radical right parties. According to Meguid, far-right party success depends in large part on the response from mainstream parties. Mainstream parties can pursue different strategies to deal with far-right parties, ranging from adversarial strategies and dismissive strategies, to accommodating strategies (Meguid, 2005, 2008). Mainstream parties consciously choose to pursue accommodating strategies towards far-right parties in situations where they fear significant vote loss, and they do this by emphasizing far-right party issues such as immigration and national identity, by co-opting the party’s issue positions (e.g. becoming more restrictive on immigration), and by borrowing their rhetoric (Krause, Cohen and Abou-Chadi, 2023).

One example of mainstream accommodation of far-right policy and rhetoric are the Danish Social Democrats, who significantly toughened their stance on questions of immigration, the relationship between Danish values and Islam, and the integration of immigrants and their descendants in Denmark (Hjorth and Larsen, 2022). According to Hjorth and Larsen (2022), the Social Democrat strategy of borrowing the rhetoric of far-right parties like the Danish People’s Party, can adequately be explained by the perceived electoral gains of doing so.

While the empirical evidence for the effectiveness of mainstream party accommodation of far-right parties is inconclusive (Krause, Cohen and Abou-Chadi, 2023; Hjorth and Larsen, 2022), there is clearly substantial evidence to suggest that mainstream parties do in fact accommodate far-right party issues, positions, and rhetoric to a great extent nonetheless (Hjorth and Larsen, 2022). So

far however, scholars interested in party competition have mostly focused on the policy-based and electoral consequences of mainstream party accommodation of far-right parties. In fact, we still do not know anything about the wider, long-term, consequences such accommodation can have on the norm environment as a whole. To my knowledge, no existing research has investigated whether mainstream party adoption of far-right prejudiced rhetoric can impact citizens' perception of how strong the anti-prejudice norm is.

3.2 Norms

A major focus among political scientists has been to elucidate the role of political elites in shaping individual norm perception, in particular regarding norms of anti-prejudice. For example, Newman et al. demonstrate an “emboldening effect” on expressed prejudice caused by the norm-challenging rhetoric (and subsequent electoral victory) of Donald Trump, asserting that respondents were much more willing to express their prejudice after being primed with Trump's statements about Hispanics (Newman et al., 2021). As such, an increased rate in reported prejudice expression was linked with weakening norms of tolerance and anti-prejudice, although social norm perceptions were not manipulated experimentally (see also (Crandall, Miller and White, 2018; Bursztyn, Egorov and Fiorin, 2020)).

Similarly, Crandall et al. find in their study of the post-2016 norm environment, that Trump-supporters were on average more prejudiced than Clinton-supporters, but that both Trump-supporters and Clinton-supporters viewed expressed prejudice targeting Hispanics and Muslims as more socially acceptable (Crandall, Miller and White, 2018). Further in line with these findings, Blinder et al. show in a series of studies conducted in the UK and Germany, that support for anti-minority responses in regard to asylum seeking in large part depended on the normative context - when available choices presented put anti-prejudice norms more clearly at stake, discriminatory or anti-minority political choices became less common (Blinder, Ford and Ivarsflaten, 2013).

3.3 The Gap in the Literature

Broadly speaking, much of the currently ongoing research into the relationship between elite rhetoric and anti-prejudice norm perception seems to suggest that political elites can indeed affect norm perceptions. However, we know much less about the exact conditionalities that underlie this relationship, and which factors allow for some political elites to shift norm perception in some situations, but not in others. Furthermore, the literature has almost exclusively focused on rhetoric coming from extremist, far-right politicians, and political parties (Álvarez Benjumea and Winter, 2020). Most studies have centered around far-right parties in Europe, such as the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and the National Front (Portelinha and Elcheroth, 2016; Valentim and Widmann, 2023).

Attributing major significance to far-right parties in research on elite prejudiced rhetoric is understandable, given the fact that it is indeed far-right parties that have most often been those who have made use of inflammatory rhetoric. Historically, when prejudiced rhetoric has become a subject on the political agenda, it has done so due to the (mis)conduct of new, populist, far-right

parties. Nonetheless, radical right parties and politicians are hardly a new phenomenon in most Western democracies. Rather, they have been a virtual constant for more than two decades – Well-known and historically influential parties like Lega Nord in Italy, Front National in France, Danish People’s Party in Denmark, The True Finns in Finland, and the Freedom Party in Austria, all enjoyed parliamentary representation prior to the turn of the century.

It therefore remains a puzzle why long-held norms of anti-prejudice seems to be weakening recently, given the fact that the support for far-right parties has ebbed and flowed across a longer period of time. Given that the alleged breakdown of democratic norms cannot be explained by the mere existence of far-right parties, there is a significant gap in the literature with regards to explaining why the anti-prejudice norm is seemingly becoming weaker nonetheless. The main argument of the present research article is that we must look beyond the narrow focus on radical right/far-right parties, and also adequately incorporate the behavior of established, centrist, mainstream parties. In other words, I claim that far-right parties are a necessary, but not sufficient, cause of change in norm perception. The goal is to examine the effects of norm-challenging prejudiced rhetoric, not only as an exclusively far-right phenomenon, but as a consequence of inter-party competition and electoral politics.

4 Theory

4.1 What is norm perception?

How do individuals form beliefs about norms? Drawing on the social-psychological literature on norms, the core premise of my argument is that norm perception is determined by observing the behavior of others (Stangor, Sechrist and Jost, 2001). When attempting to make inferences about the strength of a particular social norm, individuals usually look to the behavior of members of their social network, especially their peers, their close friends and family, and those who they view to hold a high status in the community (Paluck, Shepherd and Aronow, 2016).

If someone believes that a norm-breaking action will result in social sanctioning, they will be much less likely to partake in that action. However, social norms usually do not find external codification outside of individual perception. Rather, individuals must form their own views on the existence and the pervasiveness of a given norm, based on their subjective observations of the world (Tankard and Paluck, 2016). In other words, where social norms represent aggregate, societal, beliefs about rules of behavior, norm perception is distinctly a psychological, individual-level process. Regarding anti-prejudice norms specifically, individuals are expected to be less likely to express prejudice, given environmental signaling that such behavior is not accepted by others (Blanchard et al., 1994). And vice versa - when individuals are provided with norm information that contrasts with anti-prejudice norms, such as observing other people openly espousing prejudiced viewpoints without subsequent sanctioning, they themselves perceive the anti-prejudice norm as being weaker (ibid.). Individuals who possess underlying prejudices will in this case also be more likely to express those prejudices.

The core theoretical argument proposed in this research article is that citizens do not only look to

proximate community members for "norm-information", but also political elites. Political elites, given their role as decision-makers and representatives of the citizens, act as public symbols of authority and thereby set the tone and direction for collective actions. In other words, political elites, by virtue of their social status, have a high degree of normative legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of citizens, and can thereby be expected to influence individual citizens' norm perceptions. Political elites signal to citizens the permissiveness of certain actions, not only by directly informing them about whether or not the action is bad, but by indirectly indicating to the citizen what beliefs and behaviors can be considered normative. Since norm-breaking behavior is costly, but independently assessing the strength of a norm is difficult, political elites play a crucial role in allowing the average citizen to orient themselves with regards to the permissibility of select behavior.

Regarding norms of anti-prejudice specifically, I expect political elites to influence citizen perceptions about whether prejudiced expressions are considered acceptable or not. If a politician chooses to challenge the norm environment, for example by making disparaging comments about ethnic minorities, the elite signaling of norm information to citizens becomes muddled. If enough politicians or political parties challenge the norm environment in this way, citizens become uncertain about the social acceptability of prejudiced rhetoric, and norm clarity suffers – citizens no longer expect social sanctioning, and their perception of how strong the anti-prejudice norm is changes.

4.2 Normative credibility and legitimacy

Does this mean that far-right parties, with their frequent and unapologetic usage of inflammatory rhetoric, are best able to change citizen perceptions of anti-prejudice norms? I claim that this is not the case. Rather, far-right parties are limited in their ability to impact the norm environment, due to the fact that they are not seen as credible signalers of norm information. As mentioned previously, political elites can influence citizen perceptions of norm strength, by supplying them with reliable information about what is deemed common knowledge in society. However, my central assertion is that the ability to send credible signals about the norm environment varies considerably from party to party, because all parties are not equally good representatives of society as a whole. Rather, citizens will be most receptive to party rhetoric when they perceive there to be broad societal and elite consensus behind the party. I identify three factors which are crucial in determining a political party's effectiveness in influencing norm perceptions – here broadly referred to as a party's "normative credibility and legitimacy".

Firstly, I argue that government parties can be expected to influence common knowledge of norms more effectively, compared to opposition parties. When citizens are faced with norm-challenging rhetoric from a party that participates in the government, they are more likely to update their overall beliefs about the norm environment, because they see government parties as more legitimate representatives of both the political system, but also of society as a whole. The implication is that when citizens are exposed to prejudiced rhetoric from government parties, that rhetoric will affect their perception of the anti-prejudice norm to a larger extent, than if the

rhetoric had come from an opposition party. This is even more-so the case if the party is part of a majority, multiparty, “grand-coalition” government, as opposed to a minority government, because wide coalitions signal even stronger consensus behind the party’s policies, positions, and importantly, their rhetoric.

Secondly, I posit that mainstream/centrist parties can influence norm perception more, the more other political elites adopt or condone the party’s rhetoric. If a party, even a government party, utilizes norm-challenging rhetoric, but is met by unilateral sanctioning from other parties, then they will not be perceived as legitimate representatives of what is socially acceptable conduct to the same extent. Conversely, a numerically larger number of political elites expressing intolerant or prejudiced views is more likely to cause citizens to update their beliefs about the strength of anti-prejudice norms. Thirdly, the ability of a political party to influence the norm environment is dependent on the party’s degree of ideological centrism. Rhetoric from parties that are overall closer to the middle of the ideological spectrum prompt citizens to update their beliefs, on average, to a higher degree because citizens perceive this party as being representative of the median voter, and therefore as indicative of what kind of speech is acceptable by the average member of society.

The implication is that norm-challenging statements from radical parties on the fringes of the political system will not do much to change citizen perceptions about norm strength – rather, their statements will be sanctioned or ignored. On the contrary, established, mainstream, centrist, government parties are in a much better position to either undermine or reinforce social norms, because their normative credibility and legitimacy is greater. The messaging of such parties is, due to their proximity to the middle of the ideological scale, their numerical support among other elites, and their frequent participation in government formation, more reliably interpreted as being representative of the political system and of society as a whole.

Thus, when mainstream, centrist, government parties accommodate the rhetoric of far-right parties, they in fact change common societal perceptions about what kind of rhetoric is considered socially acceptable. Regardless of their actual attitudes, citizens are more likely to change their perception of anti-prejudice norms when they are exposed to prejudiced rhetoric coming from mainstream, centrist parties, compared to far-right parties, simply because they put more stock in mainstream centrist parties as credible and legitimate signalers of normative behavior.

4.3 Hypotheses

In sum, I formulate the following three hypotheses:

H1: Prejudiced rhetoric targeting out-groups decreases perceived strength of anti-prejudice norms.

H2: Mainstream centrist parties are perceived as more credible and legitimate than fringe outsider parties.

H3: The perceived strength of anti-prejudice norms is reduced more when prejudiced rhetoric comes from centrist mainstream parties, compared to fringe outsider parties.

5 Research Design

5.1 Context and Generalizability

To investigate the veracity of my theoretical argument I choose to focus on one specific case, namely the Muslim minority in Germany. Muslims constitute a prime case because they have become the focal point in discussions surrounding cultural diversity, religious tolerance, and broader issues of immigration and integration in most European countries. The question of Islam and Muslims in Europe has garnered much attention over time, consistently being one of the most salient issues on the political agenda (Abou-Chadi, 2016).

Inflammatory rhetoric from political elites has continuously been directed at Muslims for the past 2-3 decades, primarily coming from fringe far-right parties, but increasingly also mainstream government parties. Whereas in the past, mainstream centrist parties would ignore or sanction norm-breaking rhetoric from far-right parties, and thus safeguard norms of anti-prejudice in broader society, in recent times, these parties have instead adopted similarly inflammatory rhetoric regarding Muslims in Europe (Lesińska, 2014). As such, the Muslim minority in Europe is a fitting case, not only due to its societal relevance for the anti-prejudice norm, but also due to its political relevance as an issue where mainstream parties have consistently accommodated far-right parties.

The overall core claim of the paper is universal in character: When a mainstream, centrist political party accommodates far-right party prejudiced rhetoric vis-a-vis a particular out-group, they make it more normatively acceptable to express overt prejudice towards that out-group. As discussed in detail below, my analysis thus focuses on Muslims, but I also investigate possible spill-over effects of anti-Muslim rhetoric on prejudice norms regarding other out-groups. Choosing to focus on Muslims in Germany is thus a concrete empirical application of the theoretical argument, but I argue that the results could be generalized to other out-groups, as the core theoretical mechanism is universal.

Choosing to study anti-prejudice norms in Germany specifically, has to do with several factors. Firstly, Germany has one of the largest Muslim populations out of all countries in Europe, counting about 6 million people. Secondly, within the German political system, the distinction between "mainstream, centrist, and government parties" on the one hand, and "fringe, outsider parties" on the other is substantially meaningful for the average citizen. These terms are difficult to translate to an e.g. American, or a British context, where the phrase "centrist" or "fringe" have different connotations.

Notably, something that differentiates Germany as a case from many countries in Europe are the very strong norms against prejudice, racism, xenophobia and antisemitism, given Germany's history. In sharp contrast to countries like Denmark, France and Austria, Germany did not even have a far-right party until the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) was founded leading up to the 2013 election, and shifting German cabinets since then have never relied on parliamentary support from the party.

In fact, whereas far-right parties in many other countries were embraced by the establishment parties, the three key centrist parties in Germany, the Christian Democratic Union, the Social Democratic Party, and the liberal Free Democrats, quickly established a so-called cordon sanitaire vis-à-vis the far-right AfD (Daur, 2023). This cordon sanitaire reflected the position of all centrist parties in Germany, in that they made a mutual commitment not to cooperate, legitimize or rely on the AfD – in effect, the AfD was excluded from governmental politics (ibid.).

A similar strategy has been employed in Sweden as well, but crumbled recently following the 2022 general election (ibid.). Despite the AfD’s electoral success, no such strategy shifts have as of yet happened in Germany, although changes be might underway (Schultheis, N.d.). Out of all European countries with a far-right presence, it can be argued that Germany has the lowest degree of pre-treatment, as centrist mainstream political elites are still very condemnatory towards the far-right, and are wary of borrowing rhetoric from them. This means that the treatment effects of being exposed to prejudiced rhetoric, particularly from mainstream politicians, are expected to be on average higher in Germany compared to other countries. In other words, Germany is the most likely case for finding support for hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 3.

5.2 Data

The experiment was conducted online with the help of the private polling agency Cint and their voting age panel in Germany, who recruited survey participants through their online platform. The sample consisted of 2200 respondents in total, and the data was gathered from September 16 to September 24. Survey participants were subject to two attention checks, one after the demographic survey preceding the treatment and one following the treatment, and participants who failed either attention check were excluded from the survey. Participants who completed the survey were remunerated by Cint in accordance with their policies.

Appendix A discusses of the main demographic variables of the sample, and present a balance table of all the main covariates. The balance table shows that while the sample is fairly balanced with regards to most demographic variables, there is a slight imbalance with regards to gender and to a lesser extent education. Looking at the total sample, there is an overrepresentation of women and people with a secondary education as their highest completed education, which is not uncommon for samples recruited through online platforms (Berinsky, Huber and Lenz, 2012; Newman et al., 2021).

Despite the sample not being completely nationally representative, previous research has shown that samples recruited through online platforms do replicate across contexts in experimental research, allowing for a high degree of generalizability (Weinberg, Freese and McElhattan, 2014; Mullinix et al., 2015). To account for possible heterogeneous effects across specific sub-populations in the sample, all regression analyses will be replicated with added covariates, and with robust standard errors.

5.3 Experimental Design

The proposed hypotheses are tested through a 2x3 survey experimental research design. As the survey flow chart in Figure 1 illustrates, respondents were initially randomly assigned to either of three conditions. In each condition, the respondents are asked to carefully read a short text, where the content of the text is altered depending on the condition. In the "mainstream party" condition, respondents are told about a political party that regularly gets a high number of votes, has a long history of government participation, very often cooperates with other parties, and is ideologically centrist.

In the "outsider party" condition, the party is described as a party that gets a low number of votes, has never participated in government nor cooperates with other parties, and ideologically located far from the center. In both cases, respondents are informed that the party leader has made several statements, that they are asked to read. The baseline condition is a short excerpt about a non-related non-political topic.

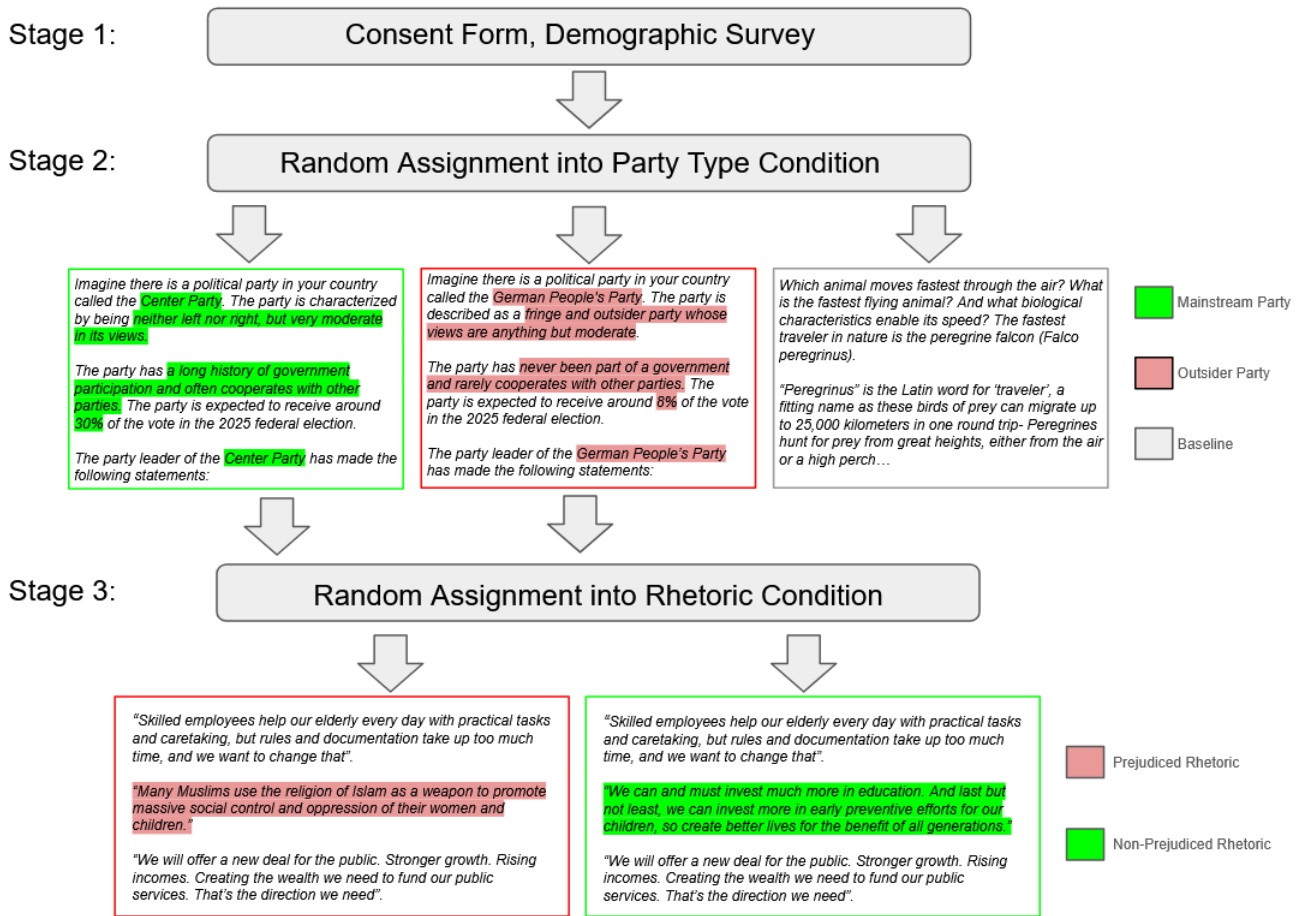
After the first round of randomization, respondents in the "mainstream" and "outsider" party conditions are then again randomly assigned into one of two conditions, which contain the statements made by the party leader of the party mentioned in the previous text. In the "non-prejudiced rhetoric" condition, respondents read statements concerning the economy, education, and government efficiency. In the "prejudiced rhetoric" condition, one of the quotes is switched with a statement that makes use of prejudiced rhetoric, directly targeting Muslims.

Aside from the baseline condition, I thus manipulate two aspects of the treatment: The description of the political party, and the content of the statements that are attributed to the party leader. All other aspects of the stimulus material are identical across the experimental conditions. Note that the statements are real quotes taken from real-life politicians, but that they are attributed to fictitious parties.

As such, there are 5 groups in total:

1. Norm-breaking rhetoric from mainstream/centrist party
2. Norm-breaking rhetoric from outsider/fringe party
3. Non-norm breaking rhetoric from mainstream/centrist party
4. Non-norm breaking rhetoric from outsider/fringe party
5. Baseline condition

Figure 1: Experiment Flowchart



5.4 Outcome Variables

The main outcome variable of interest, norm perception, is measured by asking participants to read a series of short vignettes describing a self-contained fictitious social situation, where one person expresses clear prejudiced behavior towards an out-group. Immediately following each vignette, respondents are asked two questions: 1. Out of 100 people in their country, how many do they think would find such behavior acceptable, and 2. Out of 100 people in their country, how many do they think would engage in such behavior.

The first question is the main outcome measuring the perceived strength of the anti-prejudice norm as an injunctive norm, while the second question is the main outcome measuring the perceived strength of the anti-prejudice norm as a descriptive norm. Measuring both descriptive and injunctive norm perception is necessary, as existing research has pointed to these two norm types being theoretically distinct concepts (Cialdini, Kallgren and Reno, 1991; Bischof et al., 2024). Descriptive norms motivate citizens to act in conformity with social rules by providing them with informational cues as to what course of action will bring the most personal benefit. Injunctive norms instead constitute the moral rules of the group, and indicate to the individual what sort of behavior will likely be met with social sanctioning (or social rewards). In other words, descriptive norms inform behavior, while injunctive norms enjoin it (Cialdini, Kallgren and Reno, 1991, p.

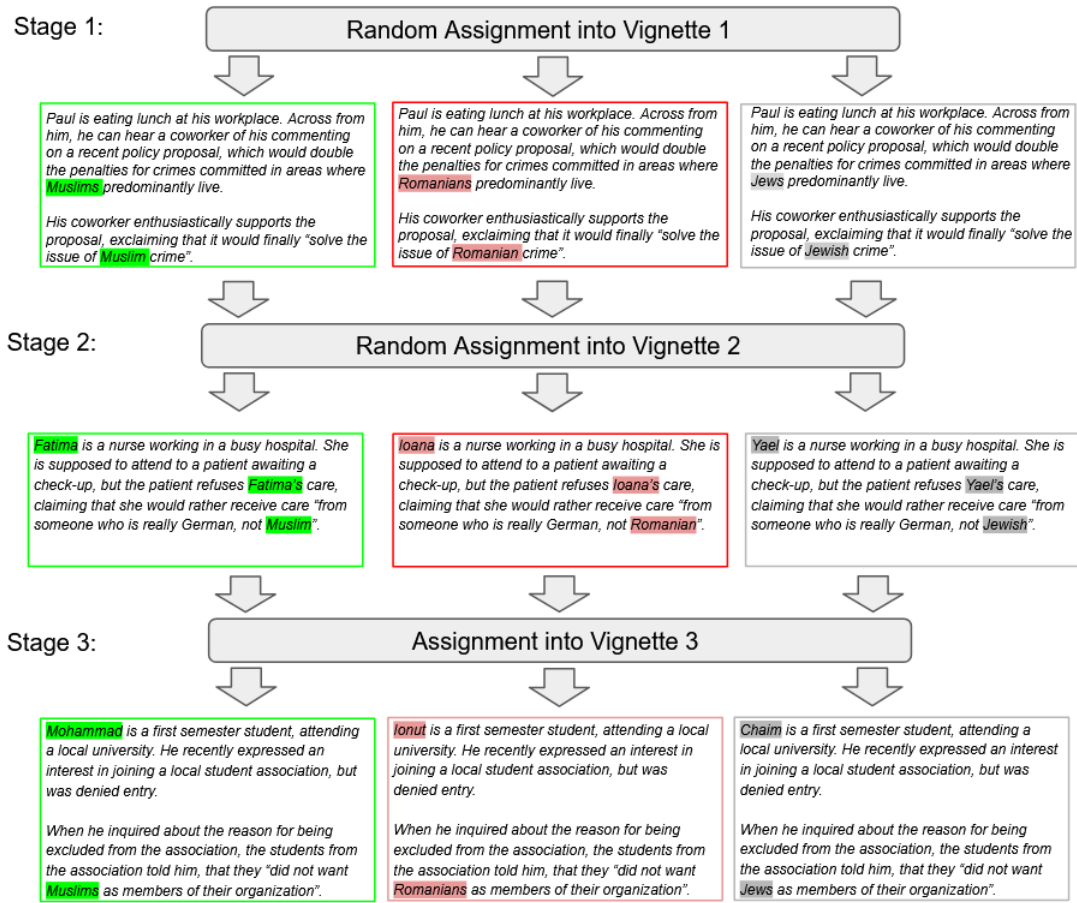
203-204). Given that wider anti-prejudice norms contain both descriptive and injunctive aspects, I choose to measure both outcomes.

The purpose of the two questions is thus to elicit respondents' second order beliefs, namely to measure how strong they perceive the anti-prejudice norm to be. Respondents indicating that a low number of people would find the described prejudiced behavior acceptable, means that they perceive the (injunctive) anti-prejudice norm to be strong. Respondents indicating that a low number of people would engage in the described prejudiced behavior, means that they perceive the (descriptive) anti-prejudice norm to be strong. This approach to measuring norm perception has been used in prior research to study the tolerance of discriminatory behavior in general (Ford, Wentzel and Lorion, 2001; Ford et al., 2008), and more recently in the study of political elite rhetoric and social norms in particular (Newman et al., 2021).

Figure 2 below illustrates the exact procedure with regards to measuring the outcome variable. In stage 1, the participant is assigned a version of vignette 1, with the specific out-group that is mentioned being randomized. In stage 2, the respondent is assigned a version of vignette 2, with the specific out-group again being randomized. However, the out-group mentioned in vignette 1 is excluded from being mentioned in vignettes 2 and 3. In stage 3, the respondent is assigned a version of vignette 3, containing the out-group that was not mentioned in vignettes 1 and 2.

To reiterate, all respondents are exposed to all three vignettes with one vignette mentioning each of the three out-groups. The norm perception measure is then calculated as the mean score (0-100) across all vignettes that mention Muslims specifically. I also calculate the mean score across the three vignettes that mention Romanians and Jews, but these are only of interest in the exploratory part of the analysis.

Figure 2: Outcome Variable Flowchart



5.5 Hypothetical versus Real World Treatment

The party treatment refers not to specific party names or party leaders, but rather explicitly asks respondents to "imagine a hypothetical, fictitious party". There are several advantages to basing the treatment on hypothetical parties, as opposed to referencing named parties and politicians from the real world.

Using treatment hypotheticals rather than real parties and politicians ensures that the survey manipulation is information equivalent with respect to potential confounding background variables. Referring to existing real-world parties and politicians runs the risk of activating latent biases in the way respondents engage with the treatment, where respondents potentially react to not only the normative credibility and legitimacy of a party, but are influenced by their pre-existing beliefs about the world, partisan affiliations, or idiosyncrasies related to the specific parties (Dafoe, Zhang and Caughey, 2018; Johns and Kölln, 2020).

Additionally, I argue that minimizing the importance of prior knowledge regarding the specific dimension of interest does not pose a challenge for the research design in terms of leading to overestimated treatment effects. There is little empirical evidence to suggest that treatment hypotheticals substantially impact effect size estimations – as Brutger et al. (2023) demonstrate, neither situational hypotheticality nor actor identity leads to drawing different inferences regard-

ing the magnitude or direction of an effect (Brutger et al., 2023).

While the names of the parties and party leaders are purely fictitious, the quotes which respondents are exposed to stem from real-world politicians, as a way to strengthen the ecological validity of the treatment. To ensure a high degree of experimental realism, I make sure to run several attention checks as well as a manipulation check, that measure whether respondents adequately engage with the treatment material.

5.6 Ethics

Considering the sensitive nature of the experiment, exposing respondents to prejudiced rhetoric as well as supplying them with social situations that contain expressions of prejudice and discrimination, ensuring that the study satisfies ethical standards is considered a priority. This was achieved in several ways – firstly, in using hypothetical treatments, experiment participants are not subjected to any type of deception. By ascribing real quotes to fictitious politicians, I avoid misrepresenting real-world party leaders and political parties in the eyes of the respondents.

Additionally, the quotes used in the experimental manipulations are in fact actual statements made by politicians in the real world. Besides strengthening the ecological validity of the experiment, it also means that respondents will not be exposed to any sort of prejudiced rhetoric, that they could not potentially encounter in the real world.

Secondly, all participants were briefed before the experiment, where they are told the overall purpose of the survey and where the fictitiousness and hypotheticality of the treatments are underscored. Similarly, the participants are informed that the social situation vignettes are also strictly hypothetical scenarios.

Thirdly, after completing the survey, participants are debriefed and told the specific purpose of the survey experiment. They are informed of their right to withdraw consent and remove their data from the survey, and supplied with information on how to contact the researcher in case of complaints or criticisms. After the study had been fielded in September 2024, no respondents expressed any discomfort or had any complaints about the ethics of the survey.

5.7 Statistical Model

The analysis builds on a simple statistical approach where I test all three pre-registered hypotheses using t-tests, comparing the perceived norm strength across all 5 individual experimental groups. Additionally I also fit a basic linear OLS model according to the specifications written below, where β_1 is the effect of being exposed to prejudiced rhetoric, β_2 is the effect of being exposed to rhetoric coming from a mainstream/centrist political party, and β_3 is the interaction effect of being exposed to prejudiced rhetoric coming from a mainstream/centrist political party. β_4 is a vector of covariates, while ϵ indicates the error term. Lastly, Y_i is the perceived strength of the anti-prejudice norm (on a scale from 0 to 100).

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Rhetoric}_i + \beta_2 \text{Party}_i + \beta_3 (\text{Rhetoric}_i \times \text{Party}_i) + \beta_4 X_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

The effect β_1 constitutes a direct test of Hypothesis 1, namely that exposure to prejudiced rhetoric has a negative effect on the perceived strength of the anti-prejudice norm, all else being equal. The effect β_3 is a direct test of Hypothesis 3, stating that prejudiced rhetoric has a larger negative effect on norm strength, when the sender is a mainstream centrist party, compared to a fringe outsider party. Hypothesis 2 pertains to the hypothesized moderating mechanism, predicting that respondents will on average deem mainstream parties as more credible and legitimate than outsider parties.

6 Analysis

This section provides the results of the survey experiment. Note that while data has been collected with respect to two outcome measures (injunctive norm perception, and descriptive norm perception), the subsequent analysis will only present results with injunctive norm perception as the dependent variable. This is because all empirical findings for the pre-registered hypotheses replicate for both measures of norm perception, and the interpretation of the results is more or less identical. To see the full set of regression tables and figures for descriptive norm perception, please see Appendix B.

6.1 Hypothesis 1: Does Prejudiced Rhetoric Affect Norms?

According to Hypothesis 1, it was expected that respondents who were exposed to prejudiced political rhetoric, defined as being asked to read among other things an overtly inflammatory and disparaging statement directed towards Muslims, would all else equal view the anti-prejudice norm as being weaker, compared to the control group. In other words, the expectation was that prejudiced rhetoric indeed does diminish norm strength in the eyes of citizens, regardless of where the rhetoric comes from. As is shown in Figure 3 below and in Table 1, the empirical findings support this expectation.

Figure 3: Norm Strength for Prejudice and No Prejudice Conditions

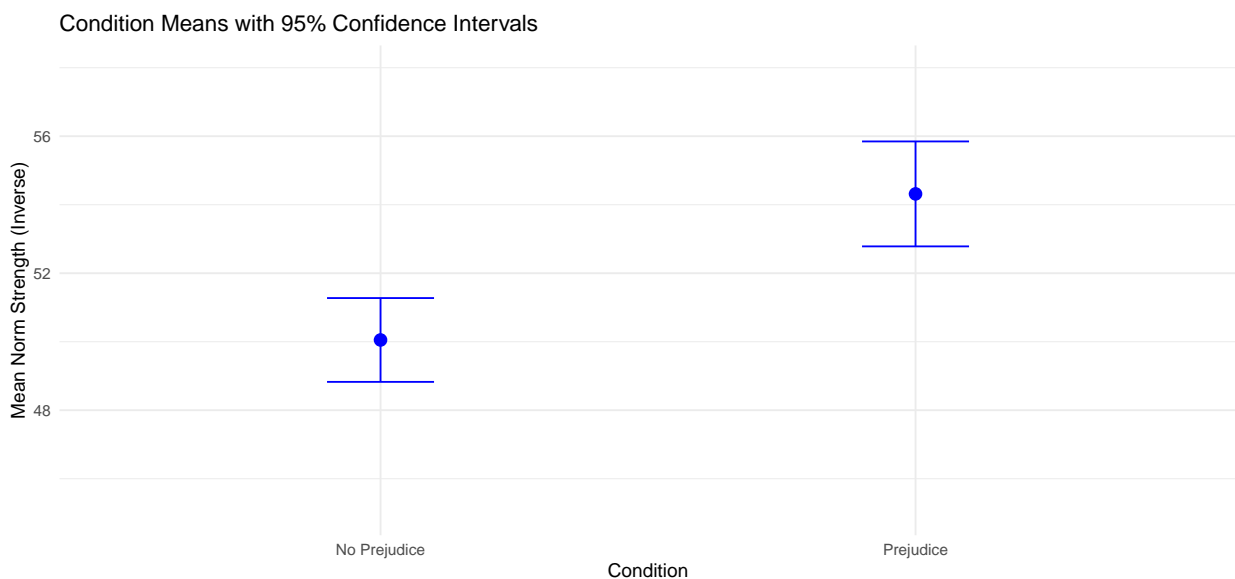


Table 1: Regression Table for Hypotheses 1-3

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Intercept | 50.05*** (0.76) | 42.67*** (3.87) | 49.98*** (0.97) | 3.50*** (0.04) | 3.27*** (0.16) |
| Prejudice | 4.26*** (1.18) | 3.08* (1.23) | 1.67 (1.62) | | -0.14** (0.05) |
| Mainstream | | 2.46* (1.22) | 0.19 (1.55) | 0.12* (0.05) | 0.15** (0.05) |
| Gender (Women) | | 1.22 (1.30) | | | -0.08 (0.05) |
| Age | | -1.94*** (0.46) | | | -0.09*** (0.02) |
| Income | | -0.29 (0.24) | | | -0.03** (0.01) |
| Education | | -0.04 (0.76) | | | -0.05 (0.03) |
| Minority (No) | | -8.13*** (1.47) | | | -0.39*** (0.06) |
| Interest in Politics | | 1.49 (0.76) | | | 0.18*** (0.03) |
| Ideology | | 2.47*** (0.24) | | | 0.10*** (0.01) |
| Prejudice X Mainstream | | | 4.99* (2.38) | | |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. $N = 2200$. Standard errors in parentheses. Models 1 and 2 test Hypothesis 1, Model 3 tests hypothesis 3, and Models 4 and 5 test hypothesis 2.

Note that for Models 1-3, the dependent variable is injunctive norm perception, while for Models 4-5, the dependent variable is party legitimacy and credibility.

Looking at the difference between prejudice condition and the non-prejudice condition (thus pooling respondents across the mainstream party and outsider party conditions), shows that there is an observable difference in average perceived norm strength across the two conditions. Respondents that were subjected to prejudiced rhetoric report on average slightly higher scores (thereby indicating lower perceived norm strength), corresponding to about 3-4 points on the scale. A simple t-test reports a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p < 0.01$), with the confidence intervals shown in Figure 3. For injunctive norm perception specifically, the effect of prejudiced rhetoric persists even after adding controls and fitting an OLS model with robust standard errors.

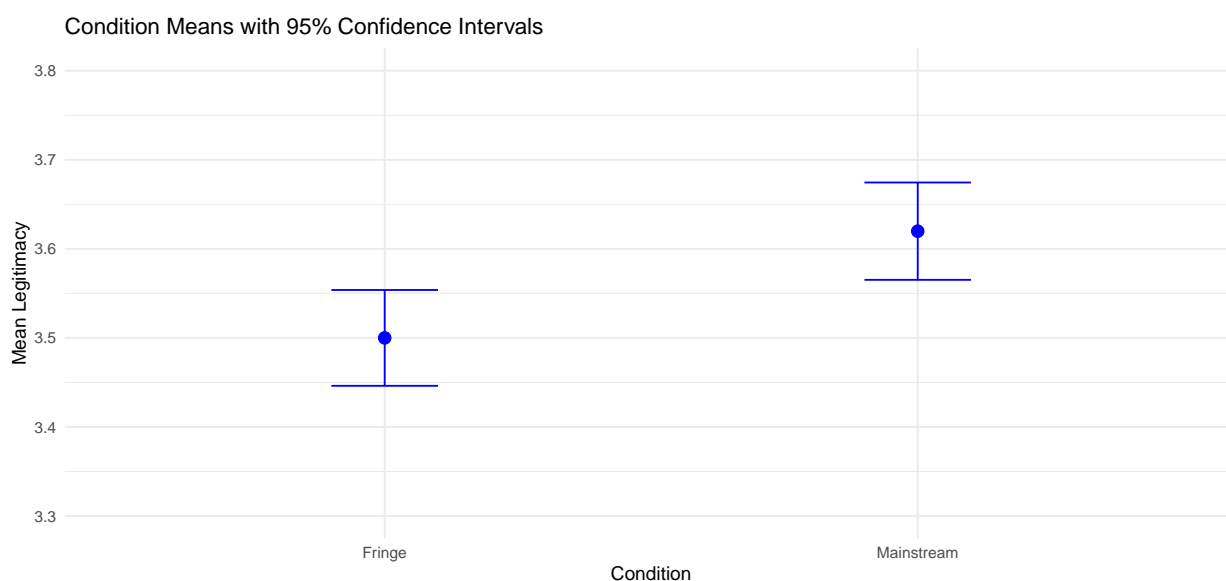
Hypothesis 1 thus finds empirical support. There is a measurable difference with respect to normative perceptions, with respondents who were exposed to prejudiced rhetoric generally viewing the anti-prejudice norm as being weaker, compared to the control group. This means that when citizens are exposed to prejudiced rhetoric irrespective of sender party, they will on average change their views of the norm environment.

6.2 Hypothesis 2: Are Mainstream Parties Viewed as more Credible and Legitimate?

The second hypothesis states that parties in the mainstream, centrist condition would be viewed as more credible and legitimate, compared to parties in the outsider, fringe condition. This hypothesis serves as a test of the hypothesized mechanism differentiating mainstream, centrist parties from fringe, outsider parties, namely that the reason why mainstream parties are expected to be better able to change normative perceptions is due to their higher degree of normative credibility and legitimacy.

As stated in the pre-registration, I test this hypothesis by comparing the average perceived credibility and legitimacy of the party described in each condition. Figure 4 shows the mean legitimacy score with 95 percent confidence intervals for both types of parties. Legitimacy score refers to how legitimate and credible the respondents assessed the party in question as being, reporting a small but robust and statistically significant difference between the two conditions ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 4: Legitimacy Score across Fringe and Mainstream Party Conditions



In conclusion, hypothesis 2 finds empirical support. The results are in line with the proposed theoretical argument, stating that the core difference between the two party types in terms of their ability to influence individual-level norm perceptions lies in their normative legitimacy and credibility. It is also worth mentioning that the prejudice condition had a small but robust effect on how party legitimacy and credibility.

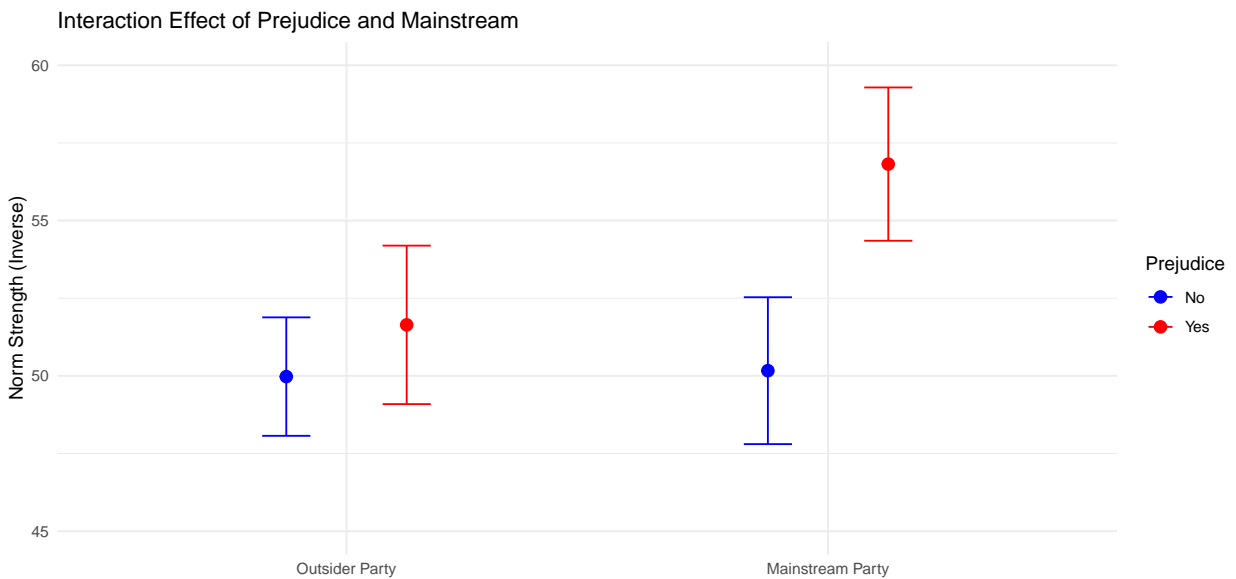
6.3 Hypothesis 3: Whose Rhetoric Can Change Norms?

The results regarding hypothesis 2 directly tie into hypothesis 3: Given that citizens do view mainstream, centrist parties as being more legitimate and credible compared to fringe, outsider parties, it is therefore expected that prejudiced rhetoric from mainstream parties will have a more negative effect on norm perceptions. In other words, hypothesis 3 directly tests the core

claim of the present paper, namely that prejudiced rhetoric most strongly reduces the perceived strength of anti-prejudice norms, when the rhetoric comes from established, centrist, mainstream parties.

To investigate the hypothesized interaction effect between prejudiced rhetoric and party type, I fit an OLS interaction model whose results are reported below. Firstly, Figure 5 reports a clear pattern with regards to the effect of prejudiced rhetoric, showing a minimal and statistically insignificant effect of exposure to prejudiced rhetoric when it comes to outsider parties. In substantial terms, this means that if an outsider party changed its rhetoric in such a way as to attack anti-prejudice norms, this change in rhetoric would not have an effect on citizen's actual beliefs about the prevalence of anti-prejudice norms in society.

Figure 5: Effect of Prejudice on Norm Strength across Party Conditions

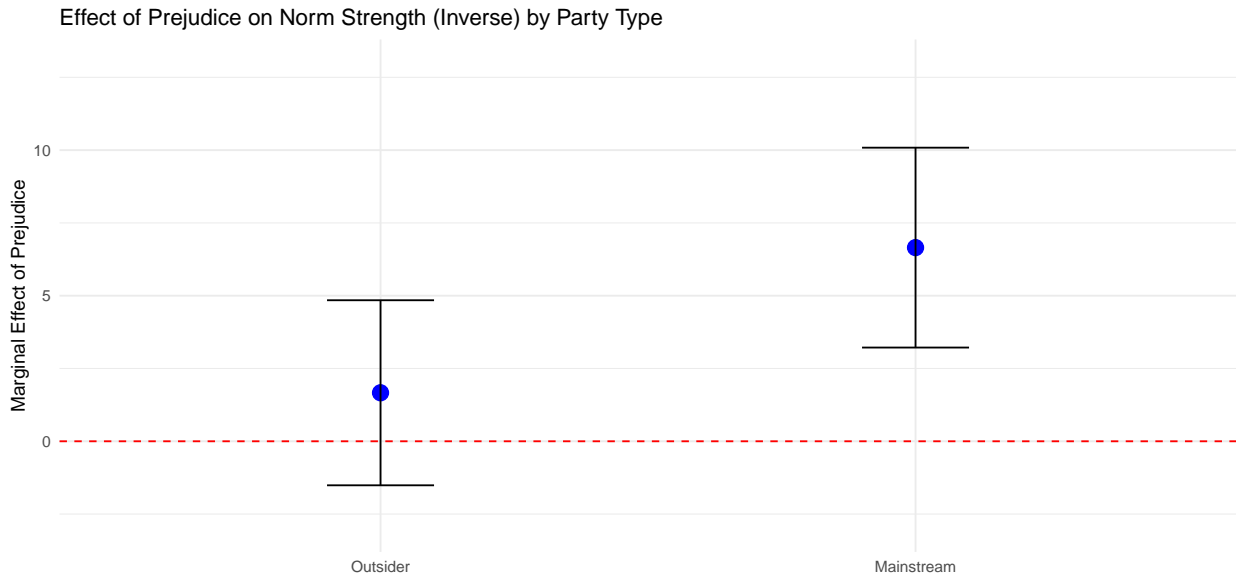


Conversely, there is a substantial and statistically significant effect of prejudiced rhetoric when it comes to mainstream parties ($p < 0.05$). Again in substantial terms, this indicates that when mainstream parties change their rhetoric such as to include statements which clash with anti-prejudice norms, this change does in fact impact how strong citizens believe the anti-prejudice norm to be. To summarize, the difference between the prejudice and non-prejudice conditions is evidently larger for the mainstream party condition, compared to the difference between the prejudice and non-prejudice conditions for the outsider party condition. The difference-in-differences thus lends strong support for hypothesis 3. The marginal effect of prejudice across the two party types is illustrated in Figure 6.

This finding also sheds further light on the conclusions regarding hypothesis 1, where there was evidence for the fact that prejudiced rhetoric in general affected normative perceptions - it shows that the negative effect of prejudiced rhetoric on norm strength was almost exclusively driven by prejudiced rhetoric from mainstream parties specifically, since the marginal effect of prejudiced rhetoric from outsider parties did not reach statistical significance.

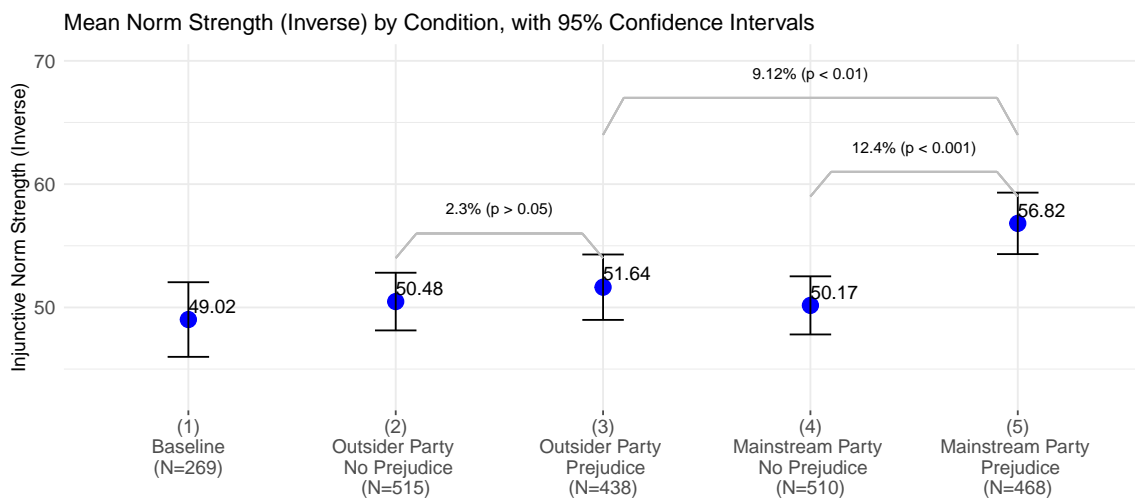
Running t-tests for each experimental condition pair lends further evidence to hypothesis 3. As

Figure 6: Marginal Effect of Prejudice across Party Conditions



shown in Figure 7, respondents in the mainstream party prejudice condition reported much higher scores on the norm perception measure, indicating that they thought many people in society would not find prejudiced behavior unacceptable. The difference in means between the two mainstream party conditions is highly statistically significant, and also large in magnitude (more than 12 percent). Similarly, the difference in means between the outsider party prejudice condition and mainstream party prejudice condition is also reaches statistical significance. The t-test reports no statistically significant difference between the two outsider party conditions.

Figure 7: Mean Norm Strength Across All Conditions



Fitting an OLS model with all 5 conditions (with the baseline as the reference category) supports the argument that prejudiced rhetoric coming from mainstream parties has the most noticeable effect on perceived norm strength. All conditions except the mainstream + prejudice condition are statistically insignificant at the conventional alpha level of 0.05, for both injunctive and descriptive norm strength. In contrast, the results lend strong support for the notion that prejudiced rhetoric

affects normative perceptions among citizens, when it is espoused by parties that are perceived to be normatively credible and legitimate. As such, the only respondents who actually changed their assessment of anti-prejudice norm strength, were those who read prejudiced statements targeting Muslims coming from a party described as mainstream and centrist. It should be noted that while the effect of mainstream prejudiced rhetoric is not large, it is substantial in magnitude by conventional standards (Cohen’s $D = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$).

7 Discussion

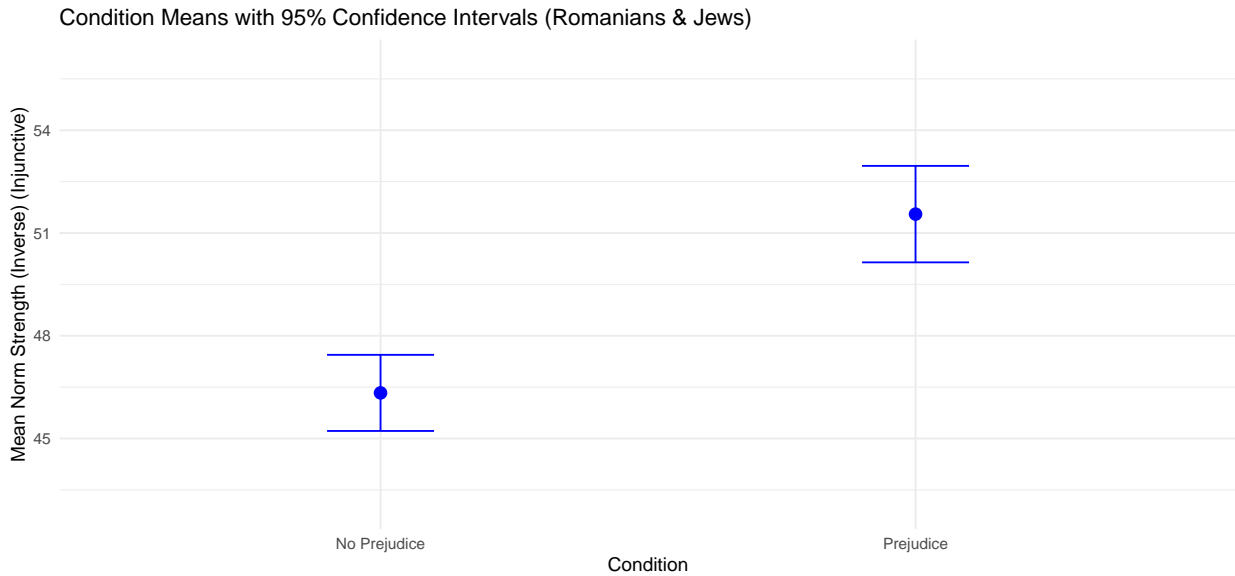
I find support for all three of the pre-registered hypotheses. Being exposed to prejudiced rhetoric from a politician indeed reduces the perceived strength of anti-prejudice norms in the eyes of respondents, especially when such prejudiced rhetoric comes from mainstream parties. Additionally, respondents found mainstream parties are being more credible and legitimate compared to outsider parties. Next, I wish to explore several other questions of interest to the theoretical argument, as a part of the explorative analysis. For the full set of figures and regression tables, see Appendix C.

Firstly, given that the experimental treatment involved exposing respondents to prejudiced political rhetoric targeting Muslims in Germany specifically, the question is to what extent such rhetoric not only weakens anti-prejudice norms vis-a-vis Muslims, but also weakens the anti-prejudice norm towards all out-groups in general. Past research on prejudice has found support for the existence of a generalized prejudice component, suggesting that prejudices towards different groups generally go together (Meeusen and Kern, 2016).

As a reminder, the main measure of normative perceptions consisted of asking respondents to read a short vignette which explained a social situation where one person acted in contradiction to anti-prejudice norm, and afterwards asking respondents to indicate how many people they think would display such behavior (descriptive norm), and condone such behavior (injunctive norm). In each vignette, the specific out-group in question was determined at random, being either Muslim, Jewish, or Romanian. To test whether spill-over effects do exist, I replicate the analyses for hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 3, this time with the outcome variable being normative perceptions towards Romanians and Jews, rather than Muslims (see Appendix C for regression tables).

As Figure 8 indicates, the effect of prejudiced rhetoric is virtually indistinguishable between normative perceptions regarding Muslims on the one hand, and regarding Romanians and Jews on the other. This means that when citizens are exposed to inflammatory speech squarely targeting one ethnic out-group, this in fact weakens the social norm against prejudice for all ethnic out-groups. In other words, respondents who are exposed to prejudiced rhetoric deem the anti-prejudice norm to be weaker for both Muslims, Jews, and Romanians, even if the rhetoric only targets Muslims specifically. The effect is statistically significant, and similar in magnitude to the effect reported in subsection 6.1.

Figure 8: Norm Strength for Prejudice and No Prejudice Conditions



Turning now to hypothesis 3, i.e. the interaction effect between party type and prejudiced rhetoric, the empirical evidence again points in the same direction, albeit with more uncertainty involved (Figure 9). The norm-weakening effect of prejudiced rhetoric is still stronger when coming from mainstream centrist parties, compared to fringe, outsider parties, even if the rhetoric is explicitly aimed at one out-group (Muslims). However, the difference between the two is smaller compared to when only looking at Muslim-specific anti-prejudice norm perceptions, and does not reach statistical significance at conventional alpha levels ($p > 0.05$). Overall, the results lend strong support for the existence of spill-over effects, indicating that when politicians break down anti-prejudice norms by utilizing prejudiced rhetoric towards one group, they do in fact weaken anti-prejudice norms towards all out-groups. As for the role of mainstream parties, it seems that mainstream parties are better able to weaken general anti-prejudice norms, but they do so most effectively for Muslims in particular.

Another open question deserving of further inquiry is to what extent we can be sure that the mechanism behind mainstream parties' larger influence on norm perceptions is due to their higher normative credibility and legitimacy. Empirical evidence pointed to the fact that respondents did see mainstream, centrist parties as more credible and legitimate than fringe, outsider parties, but to further validate this conclusion I also seek to explore an alternative mechanism, namely how surprising the respondents found the prejudiced statements to be.

The alternative explanation of why citizens might react more strongly to prejudiced rhetoric from mainstream parties compared to outsider parties is because they find inflammatory rhetoric from the former to be more surprising. Figure 10 reports the group means with confidence intervals for both of the two party types, showing almost no difference in how surprising respondents found the statements they were asked to read. In contrast the legitimacy and credibility mechanism, surprise was not affected by the treatment, meaning that we can exclude it as an alternative explanation.

Figure 9: Effect of Prejudice on Norm Strength across Party Conditions

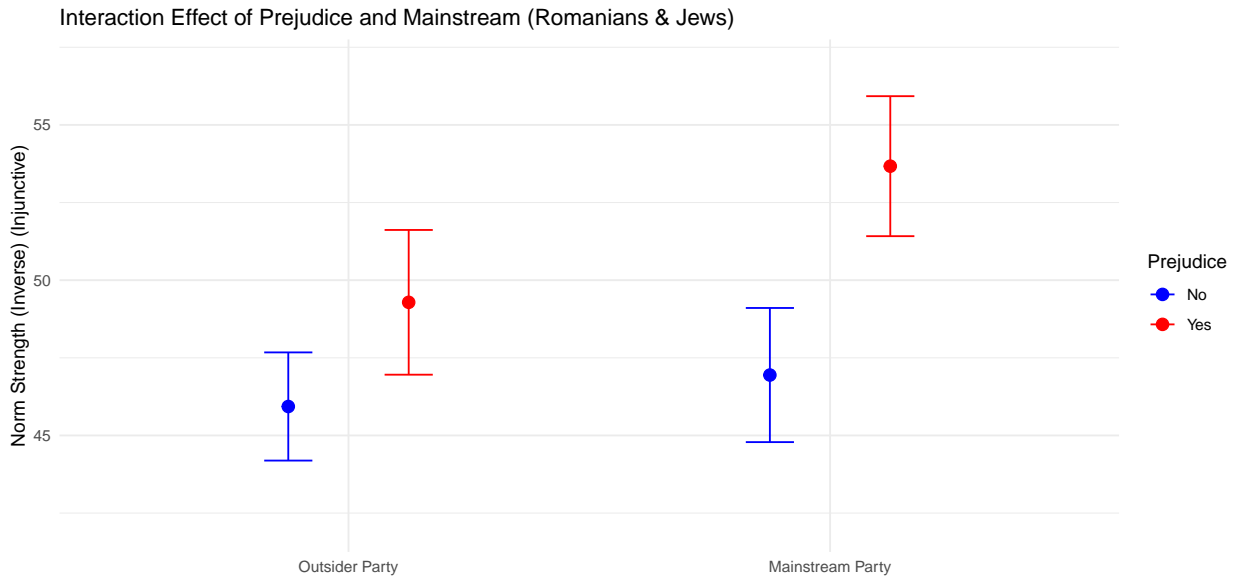
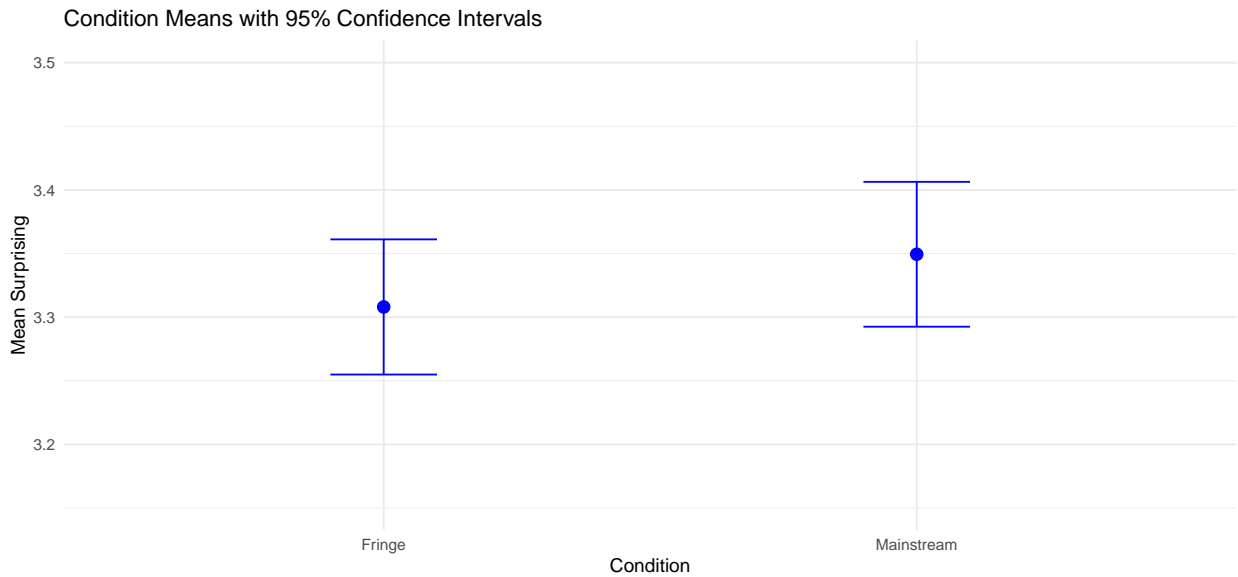


Figure 10: Surprising Score across Fringe and Mainstream Party Conditions

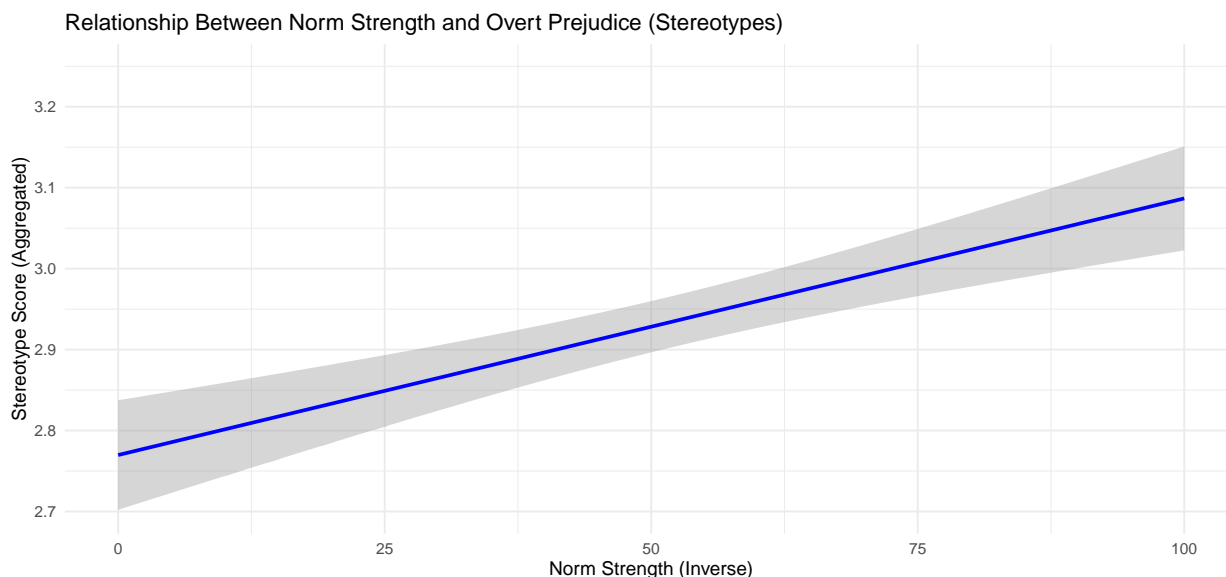


The main conclusion concerning the effect of prejudice was that prejudiced rhetoric indeed did affect normative perceptions among citizens, especially when coming from mainstream parties. Hearing a mainstream party politician use inflammatory counter-normative speech targeting Muslims, caused citizens to view anti-prejudice norms as being overall weaker in society. However, an interesting question in this regard is to what extent weakening normative perceptions also translate into a higher degree of overt prejudice. In other words, if prejudiced rhetoric makes people think that anti-prejudice norms are weakening, does that also make them more likely to publicly express their own prejudices?

I investigate this question by fitting an OLS model with norm strength as the main predictor, and several measures of overt/expressed prejudice as the dependent variable. The empirical expectation is that on average, people who view anti-prejudice norms as being weaker, are also

more likely to publicly express prejudice such as ethnic or religious stereotypes, have a higher degree of social distance, or perceive out-groups as being threatening, because they are less inhibited by normative considerations. Put differently, people who perceive the anti-prejudice norm as weak are more likely to answer prejudice-related survey questions truthfully, their answers distorted by social desirability bias to a lesser degree.

Figure 11: Effect of Norm Strength on Stereotype Scores



To a large extent, the empirical findings lend considerable support to the theorized relationship between norm perceptions and overt prejudice. As can be seen in Figure 11, there is a robust and statistically significant positive correlation between norm strength and stereotyping, with individuals who have weaker norm perceptions generally being willing to express stronger beliefs about stereotypes. Note that this is both the case for both positive and negative stereotypes. The same conclusion holds for social distance, as well as overt support for a tweet that disparages Muslims. In substantial terms, this means that individuals who thought the anti-prejudice norm to be relatively weaker, were more willing to express both stronger positive and negative stereotypes, state that they had fewer social connections with members of the out-group, and overtly support a prejudiced tweet. For measures of symbolic and realistic threat perception however, there is no correlation with perceived norm strength.

To summarize, there seems to be evidence for a direct effect of normative perceptions on overt prejudice, even when controlling for relevant covariates. Importantly, the relationship is purely correlational, given that norm perceptions were not experimentally manipulated. The lack of a direct experimental manipulation of perceived norm strength might also explain the fairly small effect sizes. Future studies investigating this relationship would benefit from having a direct manipulation of perceived norm strength, preferably through experimental treatments with higher ecological validity and higher experimental realism, to ensure strong enough treatment effects.

8 Conclusion

What are the consequences of mainstream party accommodation of far-right parties? One way of answering this question is to look at national-level policies, or the electoral performance of political parties. The main goal of this research article has been to investigate a hitherto less explored avenue of research, namely the normative perceptions of citizens. The core claim of the paper was that when mainstream parties pursue accommodative strategies towards far-right parties, such as by copying their inflammatory anti-Muslim rhetoric, they change the existing normative environment. More specifically, they diminish the strength of anti-prejudice norms in the eyes of citizens, making expressions of prejudice appear more socially acceptable.

The empirical results to a large extent confirm this theoretical claim. Using a survey experimental approach, I have shown that when mainstream politicians mimic far-right prejudiced statements targeting Muslims, they substantially and consistently impact the way citizens view the normative environment, making citizens perceive the anti-prejudice norm as weaker. Notably, the norm-weakening effect is non-existent when outsider parties make use of such rhetoric - it is mainstream parties, with their high degree of normative legitimacy and their ability to act as credible representatives of society as a whole, who can severely damage anti-prejudice norms through the usage of norm-challenging rhetoric in their communication. In sum, I find evidence for all three of the pre-registered hypotheses.

The findings have several important implications for the scientific literature. Firstly, it corroborates much of the recent research on the relationship between social norms and political elites, underscoring the fact that citizens' views of what constitutes socially acceptable behavior is not immune to impersonal influences such as politicians. While individual beliefs about social norms are naturally strongly affected by personal relationships, this paper lends credence to the argument that normative perceptions are indeed also a political phenomenon.

Secondly, the conclusions of this research article call for a renewed focus on established, mainstream, centrist, government parties, in the study of anti-prejudice norms, broadening the scope beyond only far-right parties. I do not dispute the assertion that far-right parties are central in understanding how anti-prejudice norms weaken over time - for mainstream parties to employ prejudiced rhetoric, they need far-right parties to accommodate it from. Rather, I show that most citizens disregard far-right parties due to their lack of normative credibility and legitimacy, only being swayed when mainstream parties adopt their rhetoric.

Thirdly, the findings indicate that rhetorical accommodation - independently from policy-based accommodation - also has measurable effects on citizen beliefs. This suggests that future research focusing on inter-party competition in general, and accommodative strategies in particular, would do well in not neglecting the rhetorical aspect of politics.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix A: Covariates and Balance Table

I measure several secondary outcome variables that are of interest to the exploratory part of the analysis, mainly related to overt expressions of prejudice. Firstly, I measure stereotypes using the widespread attribute rating measure of negative stereotyping (Schneider, 2005; Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2009). Respondents are presented with a list of common racial and ethnic out-groups such as Muslims, Eastern Europeans and Jews, but also non-ethnic out-group and minorities like atheists, the homeless, and disabled people, and are asked to indicate to what extent a list of attributes accurately describe the out-group in question. The attribute list includes both clearly negative traits such as “Lazy” and “Clannish”, and clearly positive traits such as “Competent” and “Hard-Working”, to account for both negative and positive stereotyping.

Additionally, the survey includes items that assess other conventional measures of prejudice, such as inter-group threat perception (symbolic and realistic), social distance, and overt stated behavior, where respondents are asked how likely they are to like/retweet a tweet containing explicitly prejudiced rhetoric. I also measure basic demographic and background variables such as age, gender, income and education level, as well as the respondent’s degree of political interest, ideological position, party choice, and partisan attachment.

I run multiple attention checks throughout the survey and a manipulation check for each of the two treatments, immediately after the treatment.

Table 2: Table A1: Covariance Table

| level | Baseline | MainstreamNon | MainstreamPrejudice | OutsiderNon | OutsiderPred | p-value |
|------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|
| | 269 | 510 | 468 | 515 | 438 | |
| 18-24 Years | 106 (39.4) | 215 (42.2) | 160 (34.3) | 193 (37.6) | 133 (30.4) | 0.064 |
| 25-34 Years | 74 (27.5) | 116 (22.7) | 115 (24.7) | 138 (26.9) | 122 (27.9) | |
| 35-44 Years | 37 (13.8) | 80 (15.7) | 90 (19.3) | 95 (18.5) | 82 (18.7) | |
| 45-54 Years | 25 (9.3) | 44 (8.6) | 55 (11.8) | 43 (8.4) | 49 (11.2) | |
| 55-64 Years | 14 (5.2) | 32 (6.3) | 32 (6.9) | 21 (4.1) | 28 (6.4) | |
| 65+ Years | 13 (4.8) | 23 (4.5) | 14 (3.0) | 23 (4.5) | 24 (5.5) | |
| Men | 111 (42.0) | 228 (44.9) | 249 (54.1) | 227 (44.7) | 224 (52.3) | 0.001 |
| Women | 153 (58.0) | 280 (55.1) | 211 (45.9) | 281 (55.3) | 204 (47.7) | |
| €10,000-€19,999 | 34 (14.0) | 72 (15.7) | 60 (13.7) | 85 (17.9) | 59 (14.5) | 0.333 |
| €20,000-€29,999 | 34 (14.0) | 61 (13.3) | 66 (15.0) | 75 (15.8) | 67 (16.5) | |
| €30,000-€39,999 | 27 (11.1) | 59 (12.8) | 53 (12.1) | 54 (11.4) | 48 (11.8) | |
| €40,000-€49,999 | 24 (9.9) | 39 (8.5) | 51 (11.6) | 47 (9.9) | 44 (10.8) | |
| €50,000-€59,999 | 29 (11.9) | 40 (8.7) | 37 (8.4) | 34 (7.2) | 29 (7.1) | |
| €60,000-€69,999 | 11 (4.5) | 31 (6.7) | 24 (5.5) | 25 (5.3) | 22 (5.4) | |
| €70,000-€79,999 | 12 (4.9) | 22 (4.8) | 14 (3.2) | 24 (5.1) | 28 (6.9) | |
| €80,000-€89,999 | 10 (4.1) | 11 (2.4) | 18 (4.1) | 17 (3.6) | 9 (2.2) | |
| €90,000 or more | 20 (8.2) | 32 (7.0) | 17 (3.9) | 33 (6.9) | 34 (8.4) | |
| Less than €9,999 | 42 (17.3) | 93 (20.2) | 99 (22.6) | 81 (17.1) | 67 (16.5) | 0.069 |
| Bachelor or Equivalent | 53 (20.0) | 72 (14.6) | 66 (14.6) | 84 (16.9) | 62 (14.5) | |
| Doctor or Equivalent | 6 (2.3) | 18 (3.7) | 18 (4.0) | 21 (4.2) | 22 (5.2) | |
| Master or Equivalent | 17 (6.4) | 42 (8.5) | 41 (9.1) | 47 (9.5) | 48 (11.2) | |
| No Education | 3 (1.1) | 27 (5.5) | 27 (6.0) | 19 (3.8) | 17 (4.0) | |
| Primary Education | 10 (3.8) | 17 (3.5) | 26 (5.8) | 18 (3.6) | 23 (5.4) | |
| Secondary Education | 176 (66.4) | 316 (64.2) | 274 (60.6) | 307 (61.9) | 255 (59.7) | |
| | 2.83 (0.83) | 2.87 (0.86) | 2.88 (0.89) | 2.84 (0.87) | 2.92 (0.87) | 0.706 |
| | 5.24 (2.56) | 5.54 (2.59) | 5.78 (2.59) | 5.43 (2.71) | 5.67 (2.56) | 0.050 |

9.2 Appendix B: Regression Tables and Robustness Tests

Figure 12: Norm Strength for Prejudice and No Prejudice Conditions (Descriptive)

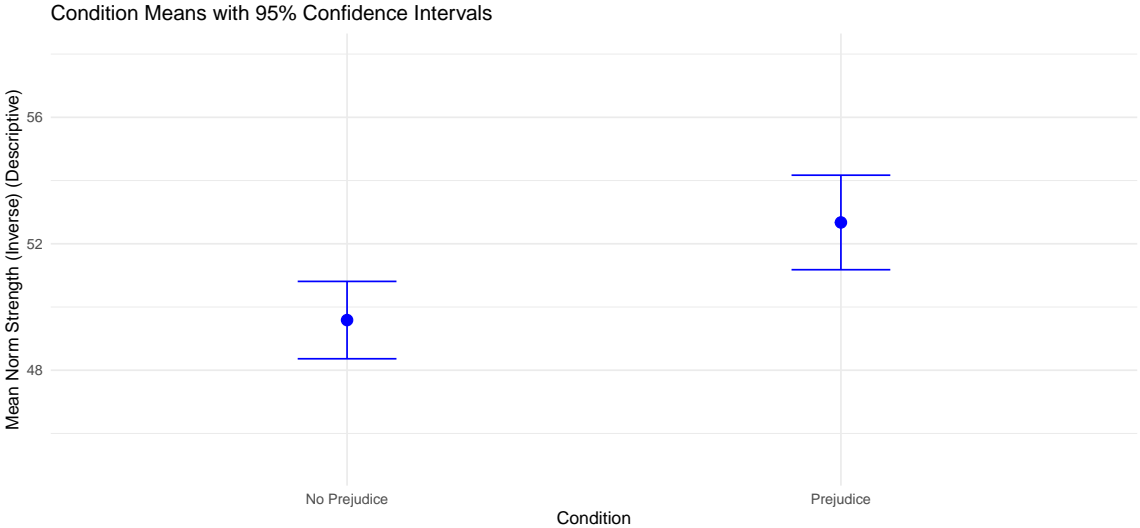


Figure 13: Effect of Prejudice on Norm Strength across Party Conditions (Descriptive)

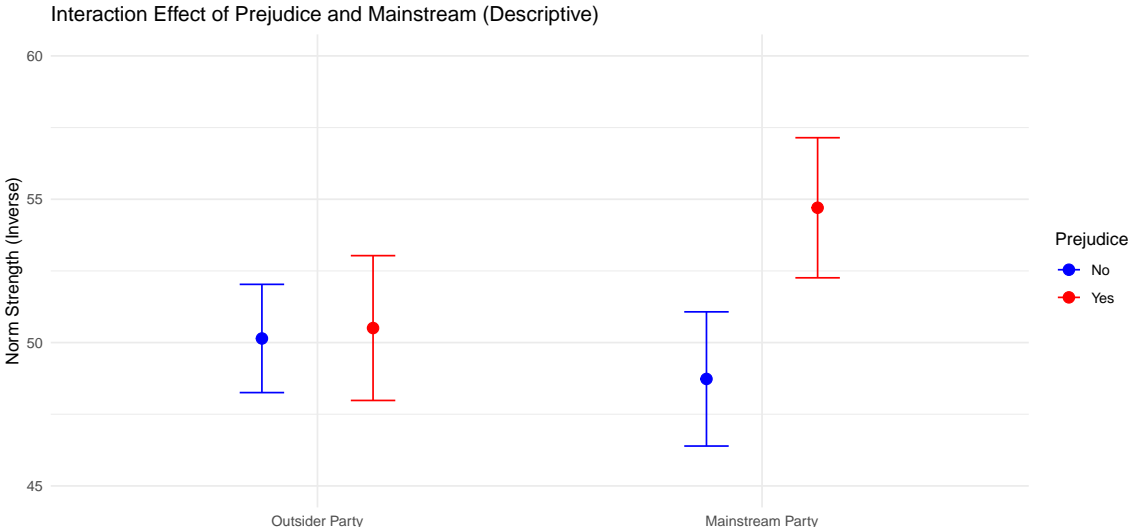


Table 3: Regression Table for Hypotheses 1 and 3 (Descriptive Norm)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Intercept | 49.59*** (0.75) | 52.86*** (3.86) | 50.14*** (0.96) |
| Prejudice | 3.09** (1.17) | 2.00 (1.23) | 0.36 (1.61) |
| Mainstream | | 0.84 (1.21) | -1.41 (1.53) |
| Gender (Women) | | 2.48 (1.30) | |
| Age | | -1.89*** (0.46) | |
| Income | | -0.51* (0.24) | |
| Education | | -0.75 (0.76) | |
| Minority (No) | | -9.87*** (1.46) | |
| Interest in Politics | | 0.33 (0.76) | |
| Ideology | | 1.92*** (0.24) | |
| Prejudice X Mainstream | | | 5.61* (2.36) |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. N = 2200. Standard errors in parentheses. Models 1 and 2 test Hypothesis 1, Model 3 tests hypothesis 3.

Table 4: Regression Table for Hypotheses 1 and 3 (Descriptive Norm) (Robust Standard Errors)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Intercept | 49.59* | 52.86* | 50.14* |
| | [48.13; 51.04] | [45.41; 60.32] | [48.27; 52.02] |
| Prejudice | 3.09* | 2.00 | 0.36 |
| | [0.79; 5.39] | [-0.40; 4.40] | [-2.81; 3.53] |
| Mainstream | | 0.84 | -1.41 |
| | | [-1.53; 3.22] | [-4.39; 1.57] |
| Gender (Women) | | 2.48 | |
| | | [-0.04; 5.01] | |
| Age | | -1.89* | |
| | | [-2.80; -0.98] | |
| Income | | -0.51* | |
| | | [-0.98; -0.03] | |
| Education | | -0.75 | |
| | | [-2.25; 0.74] | |
| Minority (No) | | -9.87* | |
| | | [-12.67; -7.06] | |
| Interest in Politics | | 0.33 | |
| | | [-1.13; 1.79] | |
| Ideology | | 1.92* | |
| | | [1.41; 2.43] | |
| Prejudice X Mainstream | | | 5.61* |
| | | | [0.97; 10.25] |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. N = 2200. Standard errors in parentheses. Models 1 and 2 test Hypothesis 1, Model 3 tests hypothesis 3. Robust standard errors in square parentheses.

Table 5: Regression Table for Hypotheses 1-3 (Injunctive)(Robust Standard Errors)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Intercept | 50.05* | 42.67* | 49.98* |
| | [48.59; 51.51] | [35.08; 50.26] | [48.12; 51.83] |
| Prejudice | 4.26* | 3.08* | 1.67 |
| | [1.93; 6.60] | [0.65; 5.52] | [-1.57; 4.90] |
| Mainstream | | 2.46* | 0.19 |
| | | [0.07; 4.86] | [-2.81; 3.19] |
| Gender (Women) | | 1.22 | |
| | | [-1.35; 3.79] | |
| Age | | -1.94* | |
| | | [-2.87; -1.02] | |
| Income | | -0.29 | |
| | | [-0.76; 0.18] | |
| Education | | -0.04 | |
| | | [-1.54; 1.46] | |
| Minority (No) | | -8.13* | |
| | | [-10.96; -5.29] | |
| Interest in Politics | | 1.49 | |
| | | [-0.03; 3.01] | |
| Ideology | | 2.47* | |
| | | [1.96; 2.98] | |
| Prejudice X Mainstream | | | 4.99* |
| | | | [0.27; 9.70] |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. N = 2200. Standard errors in parentheses. Models 1 and 2 test Hypothesis 1, Model 3 tests hypothesis 3. Robust standard errors in square parentheses.

Figure 14: Marginal Effect of Prejudice across Party Conditions (Descriptive

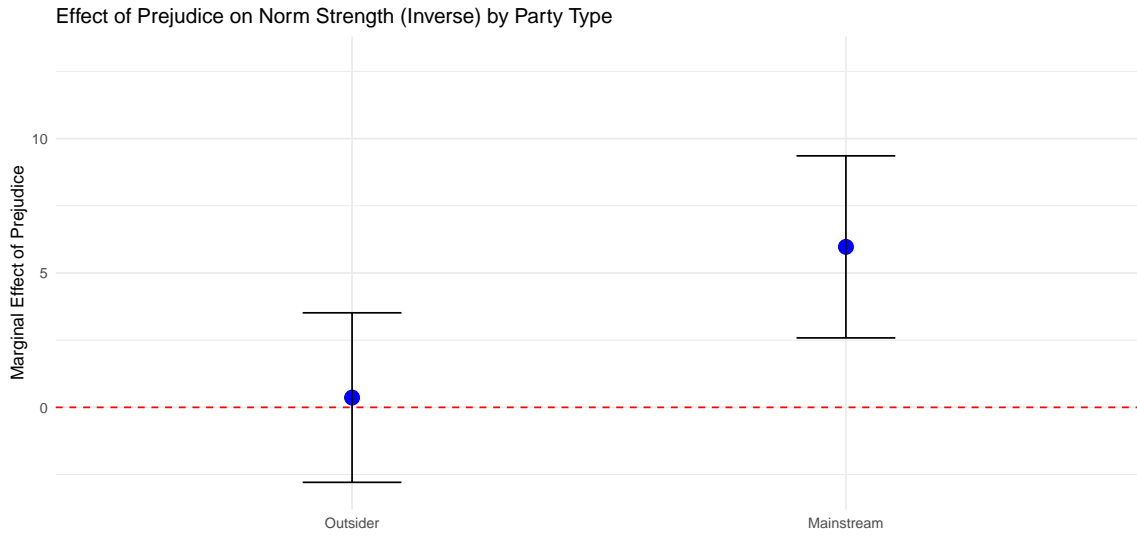
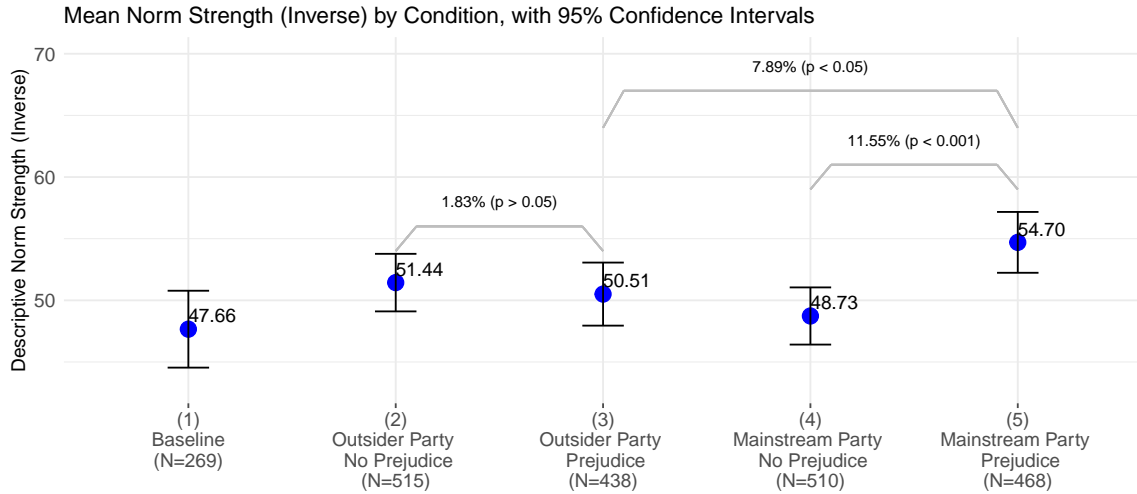


Figure 15: Mean Norm Strength Across All Conditions (Descriptive)



9.3 Appendix C: Exploratory Analyses

Table 6: Regression Table for Hypotheses 1 & 3 (All Groups)(Injunctive)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Intercept | 46.33*** (0.69) | 45.74*** (3.34) | 45.93*** (0.89) |
| Prejudice | 5.22*** (1.08) | 3.24** (1.06) | 3.35* (1.48) |
| Mainstream | | 2.49* (1.05) | 1.01 (1.41) |
| Gender (Women) | | 0.42 (1.12) | |
| Age | | -2.65*** (0.39) | |
| Income | | -0.65** (0.21) | |
| Education | | -0.21 (0.65) | |
| Minority (No) | | -10.45*** (1.26) | |
| Interest in Politics | | 0.06 (0.65) | |
| Ideology | | 3.00*** (0.21) | |
| Prejudice X Mainstream | | | 3.37 (2.18) |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. N = 2200. Standard errors in parentheses. Models 1 and 2 test Hypothesis 1, Model 3 tests hypothesis 3.

Table 7: Regression Table for Hypotheses 1 & 3 (All Groups) (Injunctive)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Intercept | 46.33* | 45.74* | 45.93* |
| | [45.01; 47.66] | [38.89; 52.58] | [44.24; 47.62] |
| Prejudice | 5.22* | 3.24* | 3.35* |
| | [3.08; 7.36] | [1.15; 5.33] | [0.38; 6.33] |
| Mainstream | | 2.49* | 1.01 |
| | | [0.45; 4.53] | [-1.71; 3.73] |
| Gender (Women) | | 0.42 | |
| | | [-1.81; 2.65] | |
| Age | | -2.65* | |
| | | [-3.46; -1.84] | |
| Income | | -0.65* | |
| | | [-1.07; -0.23] | |
| Education | | -0.21 | |
| | | [-1.54; 1.11] | |
| Minority (No) | | -10.45* | |
| | | [-12.93; -7.96] | |
| Interest in Politics | | 0.06 | |
| | | [-1.30; 1.41] | |
| Ideology | | 3.00* | |
| | | [2.57; 3.43] | |
| Prejudice X Mainstream | | | 3.37 |
| | | | [-0.94; 7.69] |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. N = 2200. Standard errors in parentheses. Models 1 and 2 test Hypothesis 1, Model 3 tests hypothesis 3. Robust standard errors in square parentheses.

Table 8: Regression Table for Hypotheses 1 & 3 (Descriptive Norm) (All Groups)(Descriptive)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Intercept | 46.41*** (0.67) | 54.63*** (3.31) | 46.41*** (0.86) |
| Prejudice | 4.16*** (1.05) | 2.59* (1.05) | 2.38 (1.44) |
| Mainstream | | 1.60 (1.04) | 0.01 (1.37) |
| Gender (Women) | | 1.33 (1.11) | |
| Age | | -3.20*** (0.39) | |
| Income | | -0.66** (0.21) | |
| Education | | -0.74 (0.65) | |
| Minority (No) | | -10.00*** (1.25) | |
| Interest in Politics | | -0.98 (0.65) | |
| Ideology | | 2.35*** (0.21) | |
| Prejudice X Mainstream | | | 3.45 (2.11) |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. N = 2200. Standard errors in parentheses. Models 1 and 2 test Hypothesis 1, Model 3 tests hypothesis 3.

Table 9: Regression Table for Hypotheses 1 & 3 (All Groups)(Descriptive)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Intercept | 46.41* | 54.63* | 46.41* |
| | [45.12; 47.70] | [47.98; 61.28] | [44.73; 48.08] |
| Prejudice | 4.16* | 2.59* | 2.38 |
| | [2.09; 6.23] | [0.54; 4.65] | [-0.54; 5.30] |
| Mainstream | | 1.60 | 0.01 |
| | | [-0.43; 3.62] | [-2.62; 2.64] |
| Gender (Women) | | 1.33 | |
| | | [-0.86; 3.52] | |
| Age | | -3.20* | |
| | | [-4.00; -2.40] | |
| Income | | -0.66* | |
| | | [-1.07; -0.25] | |
| Education | | -0.74 | |
| | | [-2.04; 0.57] | |
| Minority (No) | | -10.00* | |
| | | [-12.46; -7.54] | |
| Interest in Politics | | -0.98 | |
| | | [-2.30; 0.33] | |
| Ideology | | 2.35* | |
| | | [1.91; 2.78] | |
| Prejudice X Mainstream | | | 3.45 |
| | | | [-0.73; 7.62] |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. N = 2200. Standard errors in parentheses. Models 1 and 2 test Hypothesis 1, Model 3 tests hypothesis 3. Robust standard errors in square parentheses.

Figure 16: Norm Strength for Prejudice and No Prejudice Conditions (Romanians & Jews)

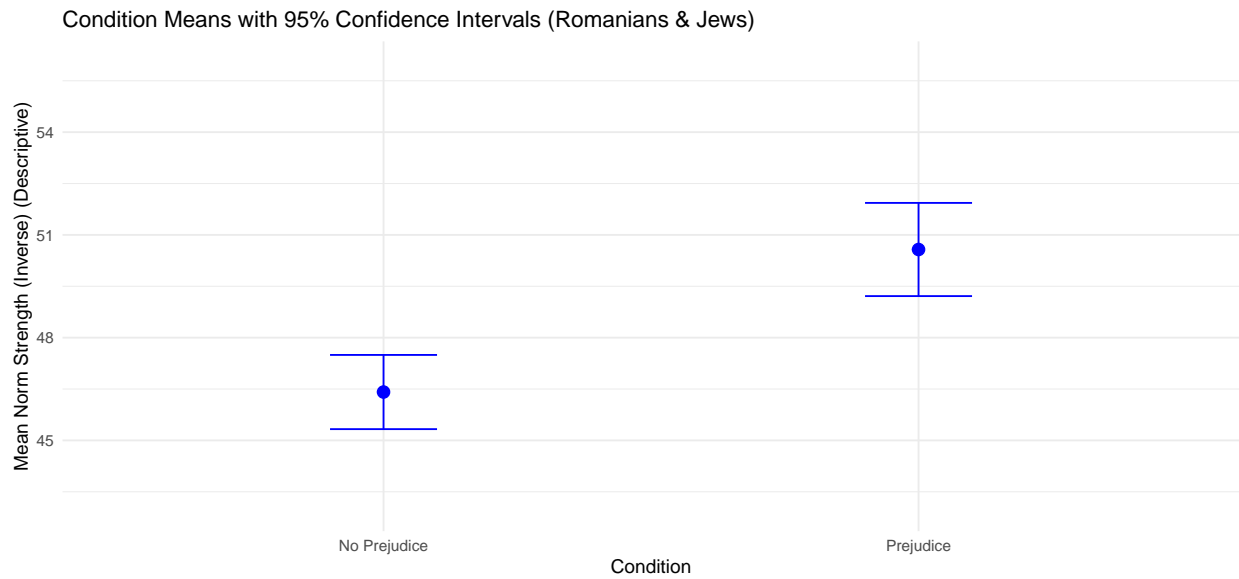


Figure 17: Effect of Prejudice on Norm Strength across Party Conditions (Romanians & Jews)

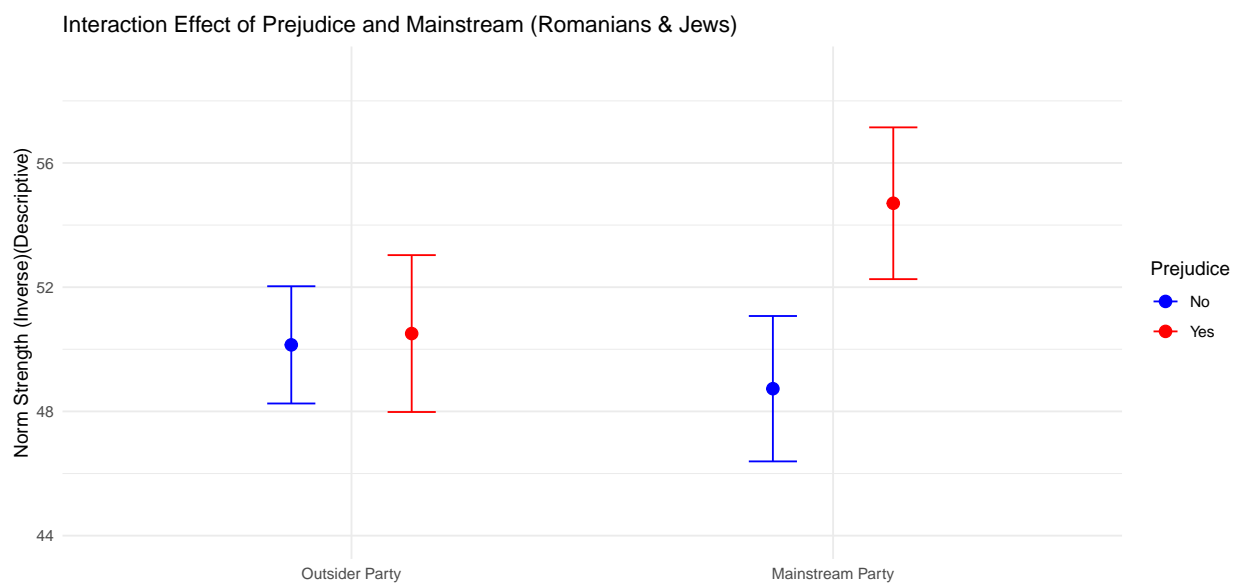


Table 10: Regression Models for Hypothesis 2 (How Surprised at Statement)

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Intercept | 3.31*** (0.04) | 3.20*** (0.17) | 3.20*** (0.18) |
| Mainstream | 0.04 (0.05) | 0.04 (0.05) | 0.04 (0.05) |
| Prejudice | -0.01 (0.05) | -0.02 (0.05) | -0.02 (0.05) |
| Gender (Women) | | 0.03 (0.06) | 0.03 (0.06) |
| Age | | -0.13*** (0.02) | -0.13*** (0.02) |
| Income | | -0.04*** (0.01) | -0.04*** (0.01) |
| Education | | 0.03 (0.03) | 0.03 (0.04) |
| Minority (No) | | -0.30*** (0.06) | -0.30*** (0.07) |
| Interest in Politics | | 0.12*** (0.03) | 0.12*** (0.04) |
| Ideology | | 0.06*** (0.01) | 0.06*** (0.01) |

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. N = 2200. Standard errors in parentheses. Parentheses for Model 3 are robust standard errors.

Figure 18: Stereotype Score across Norm Strength

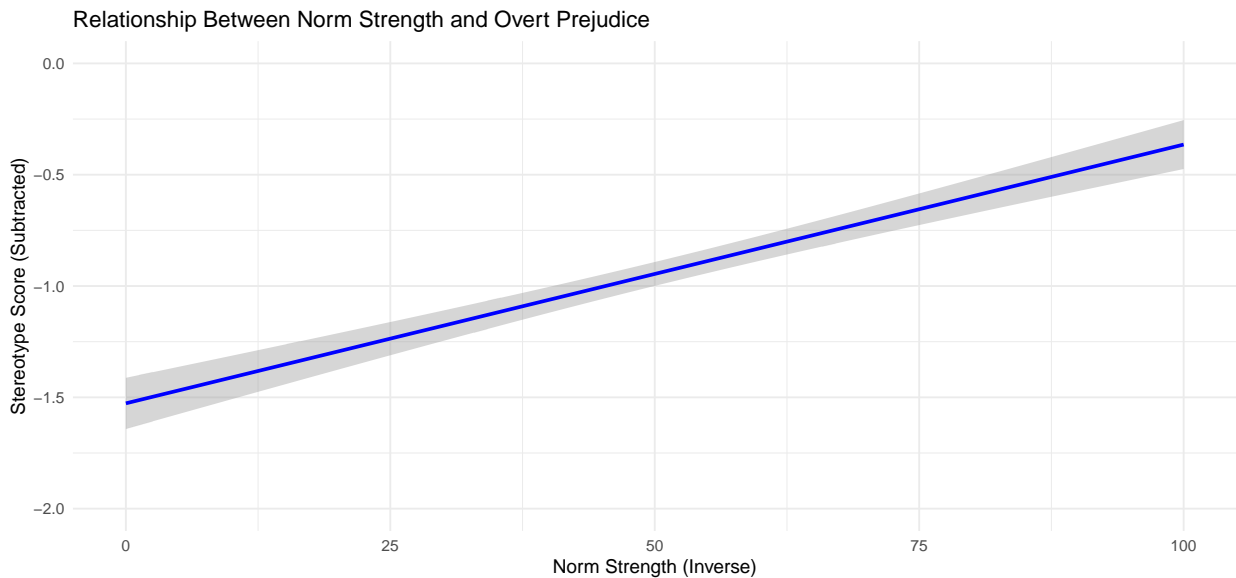


Figure 19: Social Distance Score across Norm Strength

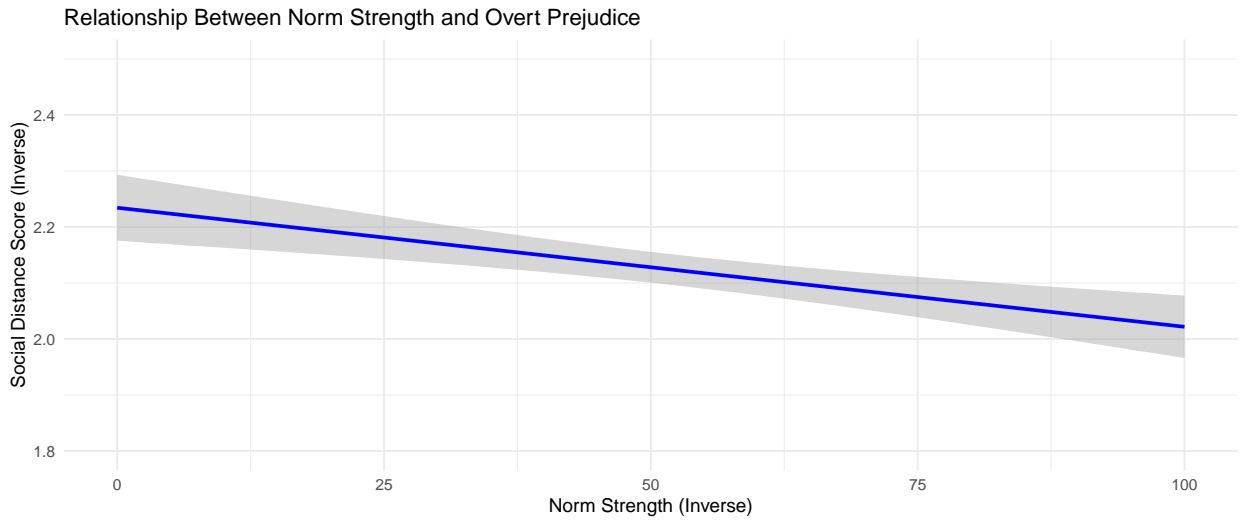
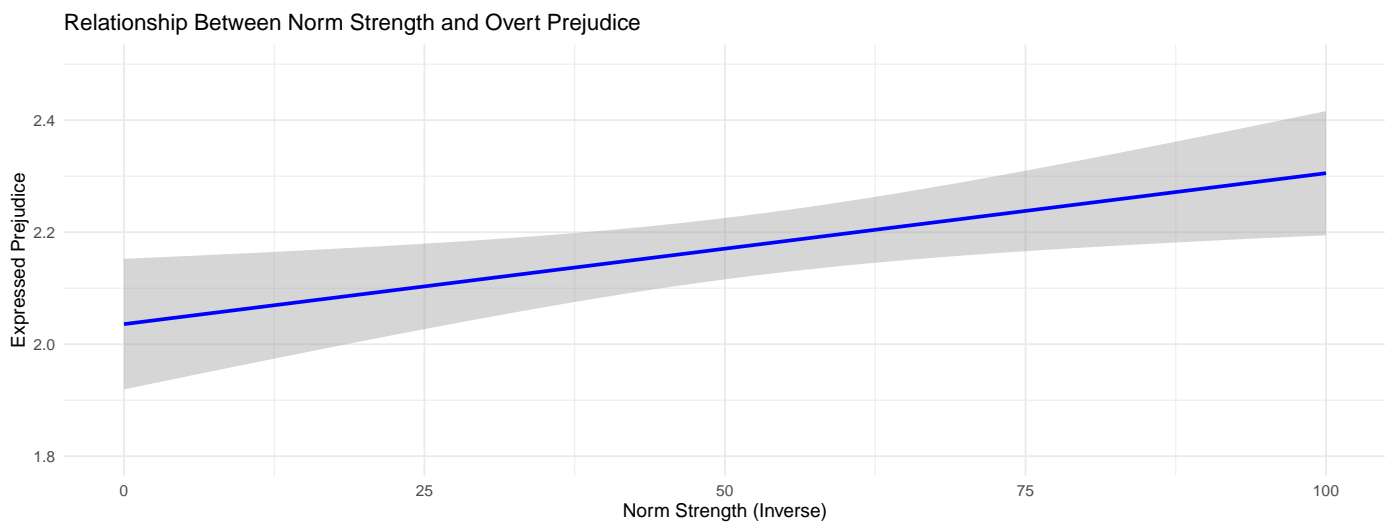


Figure 20: Support for Prejudiced Tweet



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