

Other-regarding attitudes and EU economic governance: sociotropic considerations in supporting an EU fiscal capacity

David van der Duin

Department of Economics and Public Administration, Ghent University

D.vanderDuin@UGent.be

Francesco Nicoli

Department of Public Administration and Governance, Ghent University

F.Nicoli@UGent.be

Abstract

Objective This paper investigates the role of sociotropic concern in public support for an EU-level fiscal capacity, focussing in particular on how perceptions of a policy's utility for different levels of the EU multi-tiered community create such concern. Sociotropic concern is defined here as a consideration of what is good or bad for the economy of one's community independent of a consideration of what is good or bad for oneself. This paper investigates the role of this concept in support for EU policy, while simultaneously considering additional levels of community that are likely to be relevant in the context of the EU. *Methodology* In order to reach these objectives, it uses data from a survey at measuring support for an EU fiscal capacity fielded in March and April 2020 in multiple EU MS. Sociotropic concern is here operationalised by separating causal beliefs of the policy's effects on oneself, and on the local, national and EU community. *Results* The results show that while sociotropic concern with all levels of the mutli-tiered EU community influence support for an EU fiscal capacity independently of egotropic concern, concern with the European level is the most important factor. *Relevance* Hence, sociotropic considerations are prevalent in people's attitudes toward this particular instance of EU economic governance. Therefore, EU policymakers are likely to garner more support for this particular EU policy, and most likely EU economic policy in general. if they would put stronger emphasis on community-level benefits both in their design of and communication about EU policy.

This is a draft prepared for presentation at the 2022 EUSA conference. Comments are most welcome!

1. Introduction

During the previous two decades, the EU has been confronted by a series of crises that have laid bare its shortcomings in economic and fiscal governance. Many proposals for policies aiming to alleviate these shortcomings have been discussed (European Commission, 2017), and the recent implementation of the SURE instrument is one of the most substantial steps that the EU has so far taken towards this goal (European Commission, 2020). A crucial aspect for the successful implementation of these policies is the public's support for them (Wrátil & Wäckerle, 2022). Quite a few recent studies have investigated how such EU fiscal policies can be designed as to garner the most public support (Beetsma et al., 2020, 2021; Burgoon et al., 2022; Dolls & Wehrhöfer, 2021), and others have investigated how ideological and socioeconomic characteristics of citizens can explain such patterns of support (e.g. Kuhn et al., 2020; Nicoli et al., 2020). However, these papers have been limited in their insights into what the actual motivations are for supporting or opposing such policy. Instead, this paper aims to gain more insight into these motivations, in particular investigating whether the political attitudes among the public are motivated by considerations of the collective wellbeing.

To do so, this paper applies insights originating in the economic voting literature (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1981). It seeks to understand to what extent sociotropic concern, being a genuine consideration of the wellbeing of the community as a factor separate from one's personal interests (or egotropic concern), drives political attitudes toward the introduction of an EU fiscal capacity. This is a dynamic of political attitudes that has received substantial attention in analyses of public opinion across a myriad of policy fields, where it has been shown to have substantial influence, sometimes more so than egotropic considerations (Bechtel & Liesch, 2020; Hix et al., 2021; Mansfield & Mutz, 2009; Sigelman et al., 1991). However, this dynamic has remained largely outside of the scope of studies on attitudes toward the EU. The few studies that do investigate this dynamic in this context generally do not manage to convincingly disentangle it from egotropic concern and are limited in the theoretical depth of their applications of the concept (Baute & Meuleman, 2020; Bechtel et al., 2014; Elkink et al., 2019; Levy & Phan, 2014; Llamazares & Gramacho, 2007).

This paper advances this line of research within the EU context by investigating sociotropic concern in EU policy support while using the refined methodological tools that do disentangle it from egotropic concern. However, it also advances this line of research more generally by

developing and empirically testing a novel theoretical contribution. In particular, this study critically examines the role of ‘the community’ within this attitudinal dynamic. As opposed to prior research, this study asks whether the subnational and the supranational can be the community within which sociotropic concern situates, hence effectively considering this as a heterogeneous concept. Thereby, this paper also generates novel insights that are relevant beyond the EU context as well.

Both goals are achieved using a methodology that considers people’s beliefs of the effects of an EU fiscal capacity. This builds directly on the empirically backed theoretical insight by Rho and Tomz (2017) that a proper assessment of the mechanisms of egotropic and sociotropic concern should put the causal beliefs that people have of how a policy or political event will affect themselves and their community at the centre of attention, as opposed to deducting what we would expect people’s causal beliefs to be. Concretely, this approach is applied to data from a survey fielded in five EU Member States (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain, N = 2000 per country) aimed at investigating support for the introduction of an EU fiscal capacity (Beetsma et al., 2022) and which allows operationalising egotropic and sociotropic concern through the effect that people believe an EU fiscal capacity to have on themselves, their region, their country and the EU as a whole. By considering these beliefs simultaneously, this approach manages to disentangle egotropic and sociotropic concern and allows conclusions to be drawn on the latter. Thereby, this paper provides fundamental insights into human political behaviour and attitudes toward the EU and its policies, as well as insights for EU politicians into how to promote EU policies and address potential cleavages.

This paper proceeds as follows. Section two discusses the origination of the concept of sociotropic concern in the economic voting literature and how it has been applied across different fields of political science. Section three subsequently discusses those studies conducted in the EU context which have attempted to investigate sociotropic concern, how these come short in distinguishing sociotropic and egotropic concern and how they are limited in their scope by only considering concern with the collective welfare of the national community. In addition, this section discusses how these shortcomings are simultaneously addressed by considering causal beliefs for oneself and the community of reference, and sets out the hypotheses. Section four discusses the data and methodology, while section five discusses the results. The final section discusses the findings in light of our previous knowledge and concludes.

2. Theoretical framework

Sociotropic concern in the economic voting literature

The concept of sociotropic concern first gained attention in the economic voting literature. In this discipline, scholars were engaged in studying the relationship between economic conditions and political attitudes generally, or voting for incumbent presidents or their challengers during presidential elections in the US specifically (for seminal contributions, see Kinder & Kiewiet, 1981; Kramer, 1971). During the 70's and 80's of the previous century, the main puzzle encountered by scholars was that, contrary to expectations, citizens did not seem to punish or reward political actors on the basis of their personal economic situation. Instead, people seemed to consider to what extent politicians and their policies had benefited or hurt the public at large (Kinder & Kiewiet, 1981). As Kinder and Kiewiet (1981) noted, this finding allowed two different interpretations: either people could take an interest in the community as a whole while not considering their personal situation in their political preferences, or they have difficulty connecting a politician's conduct to their personal situation and use the state of the national economy as a heuristic for how the politician's actions will or have influenced themselves. The former can be considered a 'genuine' sociotropic concern, while the latter should rather be considered a form of obfuscated egotropic concern since it is ultimately driven by considerations for oneself (Schaffer & Spilker, 2019). While ensuing investigations advocated one interpretation over the other (Fiorina, 1981; Lewin, 1991), their methodologies did not allow conclusions to be drawn on which of these interpretations is right (for a single exception, see Sigelman et al., 1991). Generally, these studies would use cross-sectional data that asked people to evaluate both their personal financial situation and that of the country as a whole. Unfortunately, both the obfuscated egoistic concern interpretation and the genuine sociotropic concern interpretation expect a relationship between the assessment of the economic situation in the country and the presidential vote or political attitudes more generally. Hence, these studies did not allow for an actual test of these different interpretations.

However, since recently methodologies have been developed aimed at testing the exact mechanism through which sociotropic concern operates, and these have been used across many policy fields.¹ Some authors have improved on the observational methodologies used in the

¹ In the remainder of this paper, the term sociotropic concern will be used to in the meaning of 'genuine' sociotropic concern discussed above.

economic voting literature by asking research participants to explicitly consider the connection between the particular policy investigated and the (perceived) consequences of that policy for people themselves and for a broader community, such as the country as a whole (Johnston et al., 2000). One prime example is a study by Mansfield and Mutz (2009) who operationalised egotropic and sociotropic concern in support for free trade by directly asking people on their perception of the effects of free trade for themselves on the one hand and for their country on the other. This more clearly separates sociotropic concern from obfuscated egotropic concern than the generalist operationalisations used in the economic voting studies discussed above, hence providing us more confidence in attributing the relationship between the perceived effects of trade on the country as a whole on support for (opposition to) free trade to genuine sociotropic concern.

Another development advancing this line of research is that of (survey) experiments. Herein, a notable study has been conducted by Bechtel and Liesch (2020), who presented respondents with hypothetical policies and informed them about the benefits or costs that these policies would entail both for the individual itself on the one hand and for the country as a whole on the other. Such an experimental separation similarly gives us more leverage in distinguishing the effects of egotropic and sociotropic concern, which in the case of this study showed that sociotropic concern influenced policy support by half as much as egotropic concern.

Other studies using such sophisticated methods have shown that sociotropic concern drives political attitudes in the fields of migration policy (Hix et al., 2021; Kustov, 2021; Solodoch, 2021), social policy (Chong et al., 2001; Shiell & Seymour, 2002), taxation policy (Klor & Shayo, 2010), and, to some extent, in trade policy (Schaffer & Spilker, 2019)

The case of an EU fiscal capacity

Hence, the mechanism of sociotropic concern can be a strong driver of attitudes towards policy. This paper will investigate to what extent such sociotropic concern drives policy attitudes toward the introduction of an EU fiscal capacity. The benefits of such a policy for the collective welfare in the EU have been discussed at length: such an instrument would redistribute the negative effects of economic downturns across EU Member States, in particular those that are particularly felt within specific industries and thereby particularly problematic for countries where these industries are most located. This makes the EU economy more resistant to such

economic downturns and thereby also stabilises it (Beetsma et al., 2020; European Commission, 2017, 2020). Naturally, implementing such a policy will be supported by some parts of the EU public and opposed by others. While the former group might see similar benefits as those experts who endorse the policy, the latter group might be worried about the immediate costs of the policy, might have different expectations of the costs and benefits of the policy, or they might be worried about the costs and benefits of the policy to be unequally distributed over the Member States.

The role of causal beliefs

Sources of support and opposition might each move through both the egotropic or the sociotropic mechanism. However, our knowledge of the latter mechanism is very limited in the EU context. In particular considering the general interest in the attitudinal dynamic across many subfields of political science, sociotropic concern has received surprisingly little attention in studies of attitudes toward the EU and its policies. Certainly, many have analysed public attitudes toward EU solidarity (See Gerhards et al., 2019 for an extensive treatment of this literature), but these studies cannot differentiate between the sociotropic and egotropic mechanisms. Although there are a few studies conducted within the EU context which frame their analysis in the sociotropic vs. egotropic framework, these all have important shortcomings that substantially limit our knowledge.

For example, studies by Elkind et al. (2019), trying to estimate the role of sociotropic concern in Irish citizens' votes during two successive referendums on the Lisbon treaty, and Levy and Phan and Llamazares and Gramacho (2007), focussing on support for the EU more generally, all operationalise egotropic concern too broadly, namely as whether people are satisfied or not with their financial situation in general. Such a variable is very unlikely to capture whether people feel that European integration would harm or benefit themselves personally, because of the vast number of factors that influence this financial situation that are unrelated to the EU (Kramer, 1983). In the case of Levy and Phan (2014), the operationalisation of sociotropic concern is similarly general, namely one's perception of the state of the national economy. The causal chain running from this perception to support for the EU is long and has many weak links, and it requires us to assume that people consider the national economic situation to be

(substantially) influenced by EU membership. Hence, it is dubious to conclude that the explanation of the effect of this perception on support for the EU is due to sociotropic concern.

Another problematic approach used by studies conducted in the EU context is to measure support for the EU in general or for its policies while controlling for objectively measured socioeconomic status (SES). One example is a study by Baute and Meuleman (2020), who show that support for a European minimum income scheme (EMI) is driven to a large extent by expectations of that scheme's impact on the national level of social protection, independent from SES. Other examples utilising this approach are a study by Stoeckel and Kuhn (2014) on support for EU economic governance and a study by Becthel et al. (2014) on support for the bailout measures during the eurocrisis.

In each of these three studies, objectively measured SES is considered a measurement of egotropic concern, which would hence presumably allow the disentanglement with sociotropic concern. The assumption behind such an operationalisation is that SES influences attitudes to European social policy because people will understand how their position is related to this policy in a political-economic sense, and hence they will have a congruent perception of the policy's impact on themselves. In other words, these studies assume what Rho and Tomz (2017) have called causal beliefs among the population to be in line with the causal expectations derived from political economic theory. However, and crucially, these causal beliefs are not measured themselves, but are deducted from objective SES measurements. This is an important shortcoming of such studies, as people might not consider the policy's impact from their socioeconomic position, as they might have a different interpretation of how the policy works and how this would impact them, or as the theories used by political economists to predict how objective SES indicators relate to the policy might be wrong or, more likely, not covered in full by the actual empirical material or operationalisation used (Rho & Tomz, 2017; Rogers, 2014). For this reason, the subjectively assessed impact of the policy on oneself might be different from the factual impact of the policy. In addition, in many cases the actual effects of a policy are simply not entirely known. Hence, someone's causal beliefs of the policy's impact on themselves might be 'incorrect'. If this is true, which seems likely in most cases, (obfuscated) egotropic concern cannot be measured using indicators of SES, and thus genuine sociotropic concern cannot be tested with such a setup. As such, none of the studies on sociotropic concern so far conducted within the EU context actually disentangle egoistic and sociotropic concern and allow for solid conclusions on the balance between the two.

The community as heterogeneous

The studies so far conducted that are indicative of sociotropic concern in support for EU policies also have a major theoretical shortcoming. Each of these studies investigate sociotropic concern with the national level. In other words, they try to test whether expectations of EU policy on the country influence support for them through concern with the collective welfare of the national community. This is a sensible focus due to the strong sense of identity that people derive from their national citizenship (Miller, 2008; Schildkraut, 2014). However, due to the supranational nature of EU policy, the community that is affected by these policies should be considered as heterogeneous. Due to the multilevel dimension of EU policy it does not only have effects on the national level, but also on the level of the EU as a whole, and sometimes even on a more local level as well. Hence, in the case of EU policy, the mechanism of sociotropic concern might be more complicated than in the case of national policy, and hence this focus on the national community might be too narrow. Most importantly, these levels can be in conflict with one another, as some policies are designed with the EU level in mind, possibly with negative consequences for some member states or particularly to the benefit of specific regions. For this reason, those concerned with the collective wellbeing might also be concerned with the local community and the EU community, and hence these could also form the community of reference in people's sociotropic concern.

Prior research suggests that this can be the case for both alternative levels of community. First, citizens are aware of the interests of their local community (Alkon, 2017; Brinegar et al., 2004). Second, identities are also formed through the local community, and sometimes these identities actually override the national identity (Walsh, 2012). That affectionate feelings toward the local community can actually cause sociotropic concern with this community is shown by Johnston et al. (2000), Rogers (2014) and Rogers and Tyszler (2018), who find that local economic conditions, and subjective perceptions thereof, were virtually as important as (perceived) national economic conditions in explaining support for political actors and institutions.

Similarly, the EU community as a whole might also be the community of reference. European integration increasingly connects the citizens of different member states, and has thereby created a community of which the interests can be in conflict with communities of reference

on another level. Research on intra- and transnational solidarity within the EU has shown that citizens certainly are supportive of EU social policy (Baute & Meuleman, 2020; Bechtel et al., 2014; Gerhards et al., 2019), and Triandafyllidou (2008) shows that even though people might perceive European integration not to be in the best interest of themselves or their nation, they can still be motivated to support it.

Hence, to investigate sociotropic concern as a factor influencing attitudes to an EU fiscal capacity it is essential to empirically consider the community as heterogeneous, and hence the possibility of multiple communities of reference. Moreover, as discussed above this investigation also necessitates the incorporation of causal beliefs of the policy's effects on oneself and on one's community into its methodology. Hence, this paper will assess causal beliefs of the effects of a fiscal capacity for all of these levels of community, as well as for oneself. This leads to the following set of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Positive (negative) beliefs of a positive effect of an EU fiscal capacity on the local community increase (decrease) support for this policy independent from beliefs of an EU fiscal capacity on oneself.

Hypothesis 2a: Beliefs of a positive (negative) effect of an EU fiscal capacity on the country as a whole increase (decrease) support for this policy independent from beliefs of an EU fiscal capacity on oneself.

Hypothesis 3a: Positive (negative) beliefs of a positive effect of an EU fiscal capacity on the EU as a whole increase (decrease) support for this policy independent from beliefs of an EU fiscal capacity on oneself.

In addition, we can expect causal beliefs for any of the levels of community to be particularly influential the more one feels emotionally attached to that respective community (Levy & Phan, 2014). Such feelings of attachment express to what extent people are oriented to others in their community, and show the extent to which they feel as belonging to this community (Deutschmann et al., 2018). However, since multiple levels of community are expected to play a role in considerations for the collective welfare simultaneously, the function of attachment can be expected to be somewhat more complex. In particular, as causal beliefs of the policy's effects on different levels of community might be mutually conflicting, people will need to

make trade-offs between their concern for these different levels of community. Hence, we would expect attachment to play a role only if someone feels more attached to one of the levels of community than the other two (Nicoli et al., 2020). Moreover, we would expect such exclusive attachment to increase the importance of causal beliefs the larger the distance between the highest and the lower level of attachment is. This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1b: The effect postulated under hypothesis 2a is stronger the more one feels exclusively attached to one's local community.

Hypothesis 2b: The effect postulated under hypothesis 1a is stronger the more one feels exclusively attached to one's country.

Hypothesis 3b: The effect postulated under hypothesis 3a is stronger the more one feels exclusively attached to the EU.

The next section discusses how these hypotheses will be tested.

3. Methodology

The dataset

To test these expectations, a dataset resulting from an online survey designed specifically to investigate support for a EU fiscal capacity will be used. This survey was fielded by IPSOS among its panel on behalf of the University of Amsterdam in late March 2020. The sample includes respondents from France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain, with approximately 2000 respondents per country for a total of 10050 respondents. These countries were selected to capture a range of macroeconomic conditions, economic structure and stance towards EU fiscal integration. Quotas were employed during the sampling process to ensure representativeness of the country population for age, education level, gender, NUTS-1 region of residence and income.²

² The quotas were based on Eurostat data.

The dependent variable, support for an EU fiscal capacity, is based on a conjoint experiment. Conjoint experiments are survey-embedded experiments that confront respondents with a series of choices between ‘packages’, in this case, alternative proposals for an EU fiscal capacity. The experiment was introduced with a framing, the full text of which can be found in the appendix. Each of these proposals differed on 6 dimensions, namely (1) whether there are conditions for countries to receive support in terms of restraining overall public debt levels, (2) restrictions on how the support is spent, (3) the extent to which the European Commission monitors the implementation of the policy and is allowed to interfere in national economic politics by providing recommendations for addressing economic problems of particular Member States, (4) whether the policy will introduce redistribution of common resources between the participating Member States, (5) what the effects of the policy will be on the height of domestic taxation and (6) whether there are sanctions in the case of non-compliance by a Member State with the conditions of the policy.

The actual characteristics shown for these dimensions are randomly picked from a prepared set, allowing for many different combinations of the dimensions, and hence many different possible policy packages. Respondents are asked to conduct three iterations of the experiment, in each of which they express their support for each proposal on a 5-point scale ranging from ‘strongly against’ to ‘strongly in favour’, resulting in a *rating* variable. Hence, the dataset consists of six observations per individual, for each of which the rating variable indicates how strongly the package was supported.

The main purpose of a conjoint experiment is to estimate how the dimension characteristics influence support for the policy. As these characteristics are picked randomly for each policy package presented, the estimated effects allow a causal interpretation (Hainmueller et al., 2014). For our purpose here however, these relationships are not the focal point of interest. Instead, we are interested in how support for the policy in general is influenced by sociotropic and egotropic concern. Therefore, the dimension characteristics will not be discussed in detail here and their effects are suppressed from the tables when discussing the analysis results. The findings of the experiment are discussed in detail by Beetsma et al. (2020).

Operationalisation of core concepts

As discussed in the theoretical framework, estimating egotropic and sociotropic concern requires us to measure beliefs of a policy's causal effect on one's personal welfare, and on the welfare of the community of reference. Therefore, this research will operationalise egotropic and sociotropic concern directly through beliefs of the effects of an EU fiscal capacity. In addition, it has been discussed that the community of reference should be empirically questioned rather than assumed, and that the local and supranational community are both candidates for the community of reference in considerations of the general welfare, in addition to the national community. Therefore, *egotropic concern* and *sociotropic concern* are operationalised through beliefs of the effects of a fiscal capacity on oneself, on the local community, the national community, and the EU as a whole. Specifically, the question asked was 'You have seen many alternatives of European mutual assistance programmes. You might have supported some and opposed others. Overall, could you tell us how the principle of mutual assistance would, in your opinion, affect the situation of: (1) yourself personally, (2) your region, (3) your country and (4) Europe as a whole'.³ For each of these categories, respondents indicated their belief on a 5-point scale, anchored at the outer ends with 'very negatively' (1) and 'very positively' (5).

This operationalisation allows the relationship between egocentric concern and sociotropic concern to be investigated orthogonally, thereby allowing an estimation of the importance of sociotropic concern as an independent factor. In a situation where egocentric concern is the main driver of policy attitudes, a positive perception of the policy's effects on oneself will lead to support, while negative perceptions will lead to opposition. Conversely, in a situation where sociotropic concern is the main driver of policy attitudes, a positive perception of the policy's effects on the community will lead to support, and vice versa.

The survey also asked about respondents' attachment to each of the levels of community, which are measured on a scale from 0 to 10. Here, local attachment is operationalised through attachment to one's region.³ To assess whether the relationship between perceived policy effects on the three levels of community and policy support is conditional on exclusive attachment to the respective level of community, *exclusive attachment* variables have been created which equal the difference between the level of attachment to a particular level of

³ The specific NUTS 2 region and the country in which the respondent lives was shown in the questionnaire.

community and the level of attachment to a level of community that has the second highest level of attachment, on the condition that the level of attachment to the former is the highest out of the three. Otherwise, the variable equals zero. For example, if a respondent's level of attachment to the region, country and EU have a score of 5, 9 and 7 respectively, that respondent has national exclusive attachment score of 2, and 0 for the local and the EU community.

Control variables

The analyses will control for demographic characteristics, including *age*, *gender*, *education*, measured with the country-specific degrees and subsequently harmonised into ISCED levels, and *income*, originally indicated as household income in deciles and subsequently equivalised according to household composition. *General political ideology* might influence perceptions of the policy's effects, and is operationalised by having respondents place themselves on an axis ranging from 0 (left) to 10 (right). Additionally, attitudes toward the EU might similarly influence beliefs of the policy's effects. Hence, *exclusive national identity* is included to measure attitudes toward the EU, as a myriad of studies have shown such identity to strongly and consistently predict opposition toward the EU and its policies (Hooghe & Marks, 2005). This variable equals 1 if identity is conceived of solely in terms of the nation, and 0 if it is conceived of as a mix between EU identity and national identity, or EU only.

The complete question wording for all variables can be found in the appendix.

4. Results

Distribution of causal beliefs

Before diving into the relationship between beliefs of the policy's effect on oneself and the community and policy support, it is worthwhile to first take a look at the distributions of these causal beliefs. Figure 1 shows a kernel density plot for these beliefs as pertaining to the individual and to each of the levels of community, with the mean values of these beliefs plotted as vertical lines.

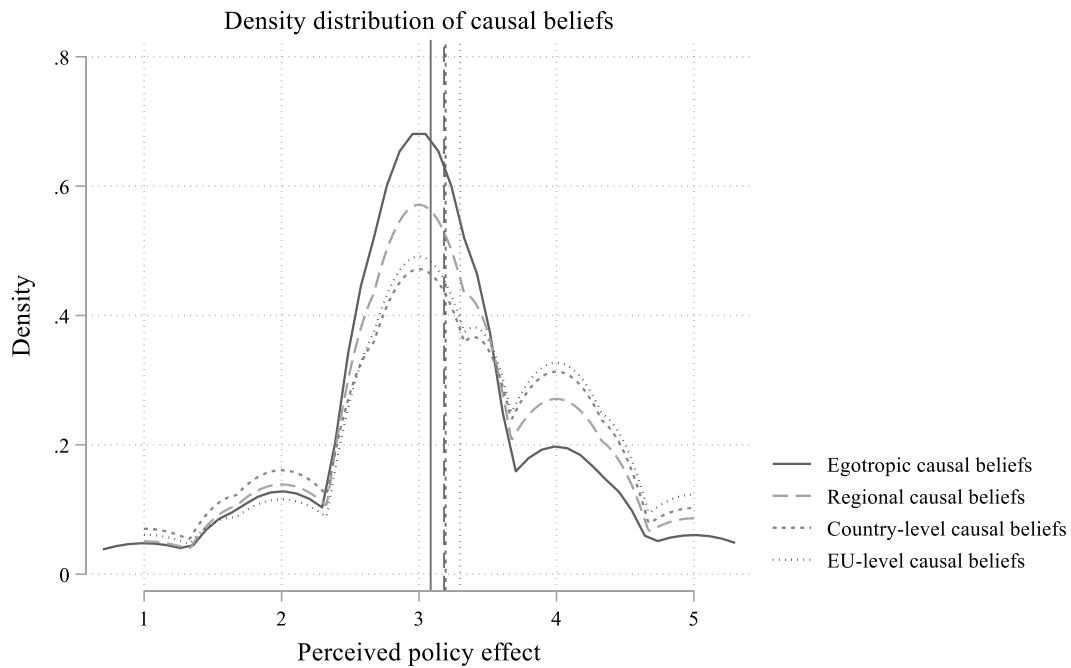


Figure 1

This graph first of all shows that the perceived effects of the policy on the different levels of community have a relatively similar distribution, and are on average positive. The policy's effects are considered most positive for the EU as a whole (average score of 3.30) followed by the country (3.19), the region (3.18) and the individual (3.08). Second, the distributions show that more people perceive the policy to have positive effects on the higher levels of community, in particular on the EU and national community, while less people perceive the policy to have positive effects on themselves and on their local community. However, this does not mean that perceptions of negative effects on oneself are more frequent than on the community levels, as instead people most frequently perceive a 'neutral' effect on themselves, as shown in the dense distribution around the middle value of 3. Third, negative perceptions are lowest in density, and seem roughly as frequent for each of the different levels, except for the perceived effects on the national community, which are perceived by slightly more people than negative effects on the other levels of community or the ego.

However, to what extent do people actually differentiate in their causal beliefs? Table 1 shows the pairwise Spearman correlations between the perceived effects on each of the levels of community and oneself. Generally speaking and unsurprisingly, there are quite strong correlations between these different perceived effects, showing that when the policy is believed to have a positive (negative) effect on oneself or one level of community, it is generally also

perceived to have a positive (negative) effect on another level of community (or oneself). Yet at the same time, these correlations are far from perfect, indicating that these perceptions are nonetheless differentiated. A second noteworthy feature is that these correlations are ordered. The correlation between the perceived effect on the ego and the perceived effect on the community is lower in strength the larger the encompassing community is. Similarly, people differentiate more between their causal beliefs the larger the ‘distance’ between the border of two levels of community is.

Table 1. Spearman correlations of perceived causal effects of an EU fiscal capacity

| | Ego | Region | Country | Europe |
|---------|--------|--------|---------|--------|
| Ego | 1 | | | |
| Region | 0.6296 | 1 | | |
| Country | 0.5555 | 0.6901 | 1 | |
| Europe | 0.4366 | 0.4802 | 0.6156 | 1 |

The effect of sociotropic concern on support for an EU fiscal capacity

Next, we turn to the question of whether these causal beliefs influence support for an EU fiscal capacity. Table 2 shows the results of a series of regressions on the rating given to a policy package on beliefs of the policy’s effects on oneself and the different levels of community, and the control variables. Note that the effects of the policy characteristics are controlled for but suppressed from the output, as are the fixed country effects.

Models 1 to 4 regress the believes for the ego and each of the levels of the community separately. In each of these models, these causal beliefs have a strong effect on support for the policy. Model 1 shows that the rating given to a particular proposal for an EU fiscal capacity is on average 0.149 higher (lower) for every 1-point increase (decrease) in the positivity (negativity) of the perceived effect of the policy on oneself. As shown in models 2 to 4, the perceived effects on the different levels of community are also shown to strongly influence support for the policy: in these cases, a 1-point increase (decrease) in the positivity (negativity) of the perceived effect of the policy on the region, the nation and the EU as a whole is associated with a 0.130, 0.125 and 0.097 higher (lower) rating given to a proposal for the policy. All of these effects are significant on the .001 level.

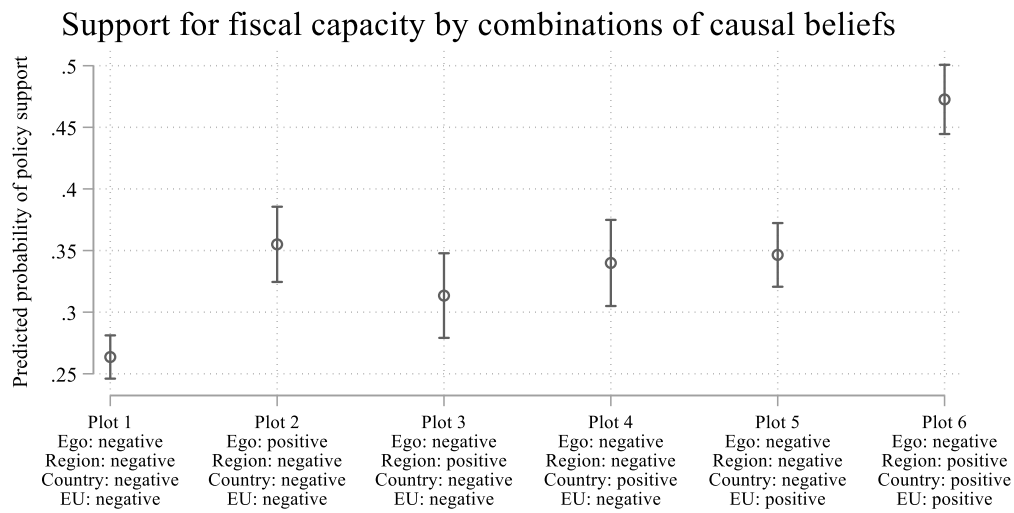
The most important question however is whether these community-level causal beliefs also have an effect on policy support while controlling for the perceived effects on oneself. To this end, model 5 includes each of these causal beliefs simultaneously. Here, the effects of causal beliefs for the ego and for each of the community levels are lower than when these are included separately, indicating that these separate effects are confounded by the other causal beliefs. However, they remain significant at conventional levels, confirming hypothesis 1a, 2a and 3a. Interestingly, the effects of causal beliefs for the region and the EU as a whole are reduced in their effect size more than are beliefs for the ego and the country.

Table 1. Regression of support for fiscal capacity on sociotropic concern

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | | Model 5 | | Model 6 | |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|----------------|---------|-----------------|---------|
| | B | s.e. | B | s.e. | B | s.e. | B | s.e. | B | s.e. | B | s.e. |
| Causal beliefs: ego | 0.149*** | (0.009) | | | | | | | 0.078*** | (0.009) | 0.023*** | (0.004) |
| Causal beliefs: region | | | 0.130*** | (0.008) | | | | | 0.030** | (0.009) | 0.012** | (0.004) |
| Causal beliefs: country | | | | | 0.125*** | (0.007) | | | 0.060*** | (0.009) | 0.019*** | (0.004) |
| Causal beliefs: Europe | | | | | | | 0.097*** | (0.007) | 0.019* | (0.008) | 0.021*** | (0.003) |
| Age | -0.001*** | (0.000) | -0.002*** | (0.000) | -0.002*** | (0.000) | -0.002*** | (0.000) | -0.002*** | (0.000) | 0.000 | (0.000) |
| Income: low | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) |
| Income: middle | -0.014 | (0.013) | -0.012 | (0.013) | -0.017 | (0.013) | -0.014 | (0.014) | -0.017 | (0.013) | -0.004 | (0.006) |
| Income: high | -0.026 | (0.015) | -0.028 | (0.015) | -0.027 | (0.015) | -0.026 | (0.015) | -0.030* | (0.015) | -0.008 | (0.007) |
| Income: refused | -0.064** | (0.020) | -0.059** | (0.021) | -0.056** | (0.020) | -0.061** | (0.021) | -0.055** | (0.020) | -0.053*** | (0.011) |
| Gender | -0.012 | (0.011) | -0.008 | (0.011) | -0.010 | (0.011) | -0.010 | (0.011) | -0.008 | (0.011) | -0.016** | (0.005) |
| Education level | -0.005 | (0.003) | -0.005 | (0.003) | -0.006 | (0.003) | -0.008** | (0.003) | -0.006* | (0.003) | 0.004** | (0.001) |
| General ideology | -0.000 | (0.002) | -0.001 | (0.002) | 0.001 | (0.002) | 0.000 | (0.002) | 0.001 | (0.002) | 0.001 | (0.001) |
| Exclusive nationalist | -0.032* | (0.013) | -0.034** | (0.013) | -0.017 | (0.013) | -0.021 | (0.013) | -0.010 | (0.013) | -0.010 | (0.006) |
| Conjoint framing | -0.004 | (0.010) | -0.004 | (0.010) | -0.005 | (0.010) | -0.004 | (0.011) | -0.004 | (0.010) | -0.001 | (0.005) |
| Constant | 2.645*** | (0.044) | 2.704*** | (0.042) | 2.707*** | (0.041) | 2.790*** | (0.043) | 2.512*** | (0.048) | 0.058** | (0.021) |
| Dependent variable | Package rating | | Package rating | | Package rating | | Package rating | | Package rating | | Package support | |
| Observations | 45024 | | 45024 | | 45024 | | 45024 | | 45024 | | 45024 | |
| Adjusted R-squared | 0.045 | | 0.045 | | 0.046 | | 0.040 | | 0.050 | | 0.039 | |

Note: standard errors in parentheses; conjoint dimension effects and country fixed effects suppressed from output; standard errors clustered on the individual level

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001



Graph based on model 6

Figure 2

In order to get a grasp on the magnitude of these effect sizes, figure 2 shows the predicted level of support for the EU fiscal capacity for different combinations of causal beliefs for the ego and the different levels of community. Here, the dependent variable has been recoded to indicate support for a package (a rating of 4 or 5, model 6 in table 2). Plot 1 in the graph shows the level of support when all four causal beliefs are negative (a score of 1), which results in the policy being supported by 26.4 percent of respondents. The four following plots show the level of support when one of these causal beliefs is positive (a score of 5), while the others are positive (1). This shows that when the policy is believed to have a positive effect on oneself while it is believed to have a negative effect on all the other levels of community, the level of support is 35.5 percent, indicating egotropic concern (plot 2). Beliefs of positive effects for one level of community while beliefs for the ego and the other levels of community are negative increase the level of support to 31.3 percent (region positive, plot 3), 34.0 percent (country positive, plot 4) and 34.6 percent (EU positive, plot 5). Lastly, even if the policy is believed to have negative effects on oneself but a positive effect on all the other levels of community, the level of support reaches 47.3 percent (plot 6). As such, causal beliefs for the different levels of community have a substantial impact on policy support, and the combined effect of these causal beliefs is stronger than that of perceived effects on oneself.

Community attachment

Next, we turn to discuss whether these causal beliefs for the community are associated to stronger or weaker support under the condition that people feel more attached to one of the three levels of community than the other two. Table 2 shows the result of a split sample analysis, where the sample is split into groups of those who feel more attached to one particular level of community. The results of this analysis are aligned with the hypotheses: causal beliefs of the policy's effect on a particular level of community are more relevant for those who feel more attached to that level of community compared to those who feel more attached to any of the other levels of community. For example, causal beliefs for the region only have a significant effect on support for those who feel more attached to their region ('localists'), while the effect is smaller and nonsignificant for those who feel more attached to the country or the EU. However, this does not mean that causal beliefs for the levels of community that one does not feel more attached to are irrelevant, as for example beliefs for the country are also influential among 'localists', while beliefs for the EU are also influential among 'nationalists'.

Table 2. Regression of support for fiscal capacity by exclusive attachment

| | Model 1: localist | | Model 2: national | | Model 3: European | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|
| | B | s.e. | B | s.e. | B | s.e. |
| Causal beliefs: ego | 0.077*** | (0.022) | 0.103*** | (0.017) | 0.052 | (0.031) |
| Causal beliefs: region | 0.052* | (0.021) | 0.010 | (0.016) | 0.010 | (0.036) |
| Causal beliefs: country | 0.073*** | (0.019) | 0.077*** | (0.014) | -0.007 | (0.031) |
| Causal beliefs: Europe | -0.031 | (0.017) | 0.038** | (0.014) | 0.058* | (0.027) |
| Age | -0.001 | (0.001) | -0.001** | (0.001) | -0.002 | (0.001) |
| Income: low | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) |
| Income: middle | -0.041 | (0.030) | 0.037 | (0.023) | 0.055 | (0.053) |
| Income: high | -0.049 | (0.036) | 0.008 | (0.026) | 0.041 | (0.050) |
| Income: refused | -0.072 | (0.046) | 0.006 | (0.037) | -0.069 | (0.080) |
| Gender | -0.017 | (0.025) | 0.005 | (0.019) | 0.034 | (0.042) |
| Education level | -0.000 | (0.007) | -0.014** | (0.005) | 0.001 | (0.010) |
| General ideology | -0.010 | (0.006) | 0.003 | (0.005) | 0.008 | (0.009) |
| Exclusive nationalist | -0.071* | (0.028) | 0.009 | (0.020) | -0.099 | (0.097) |
| Conjoint framing | -0.012 | (0.025) | 0.003 | (0.018) | 0.022 | (0.038) |
| Constant | 2.740*** | (0.109) | 2.335*** | (0.091) | 2.447*** | (0.204) |
| Observations | 7830 | | 14718 | | 2868 | |
| Adjusted R-squared | 0.052 | | 0.058 | | 0.046 | |

Note: standard errors in parentheses; conjoint dimension effects and country fixed effects suppressed from output; standard errors clustered on the individual level

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

In order to provide a formal test of the exclusive attachment mechanism, a full interaction model is estimated wherein causal beliefs for a particular level of community are interacted

with the degree of exclusive attachment for that particular level of community. This model includes the same set of controls as the models presented in table 2, except for exclusive nationalism, which can be considered as an alternative operationalisation for attachment to the nation and the EU (see the robustness section). This results in a significant interaction between causal beliefs for the region and exclusive local attachment, and causal beliefs for the country and exclusive national attachment, but not for EU causal beliefs and exclusive attachment to the EU. The complete results are shown in appendix table A.1, here the discussion will focus on a graphical presentation of these results.

Figure 3 shows how the effect of causal beliefs for the region on the level of support for the policy changes on the basis of the level of exclusive attachment to the region. For those with no exclusive attachment to the region (a score of 0), the average rating given to a package is 3.16 for very negative perceived effects of the policy, while it is 3.25 for very positive perceived effects of the policy. For those who have a strong exclusive local attachment (a score of 10), this difference is substantially bigger, from 2.39 for very negative perceived effects to 3.33 for very positive perceived effects. Hence, the slope of causal beliefs differs for different levels of exclusive attachment, confirming hypothesis 1b.

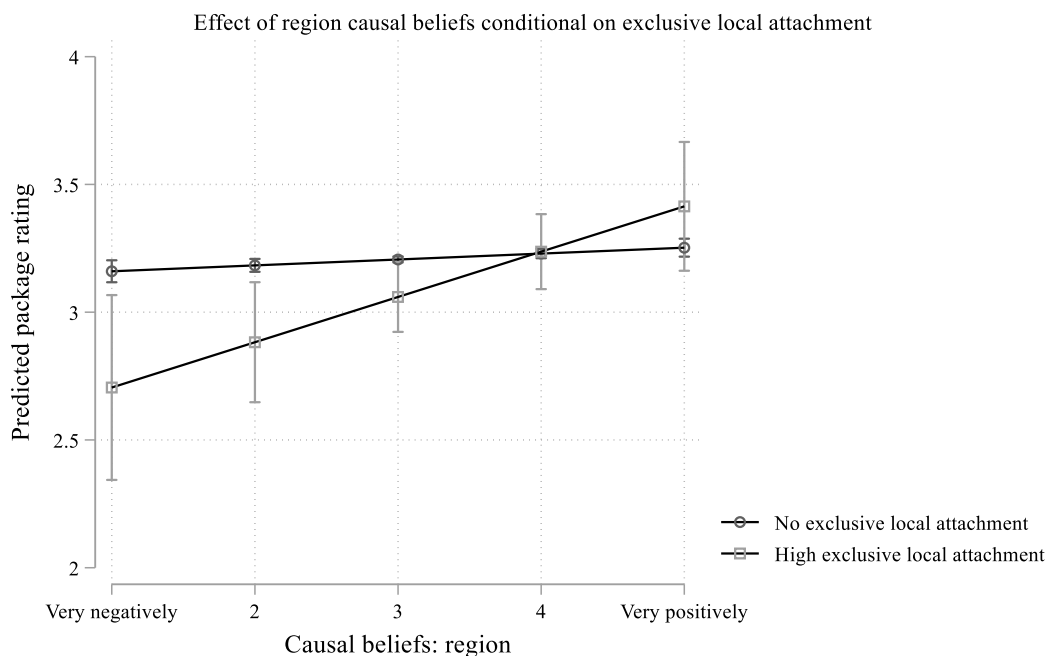


Figure 3

Figure 4 shows the effects of this interaction for country causal beliefs and exclusive national attachment. Here the difference in the effect of causal beliefs between those who do not exclusively attach to the nation and those who strongly do so is even larger: while the average policy rating varies from 3.11 to 3.30 for those who are not exclusively attached to the nation, it varies from 2.74 to 3.45 for those who have a strong exclusive attachment to the nation. This shows that hypothesis 2b is confirmed.

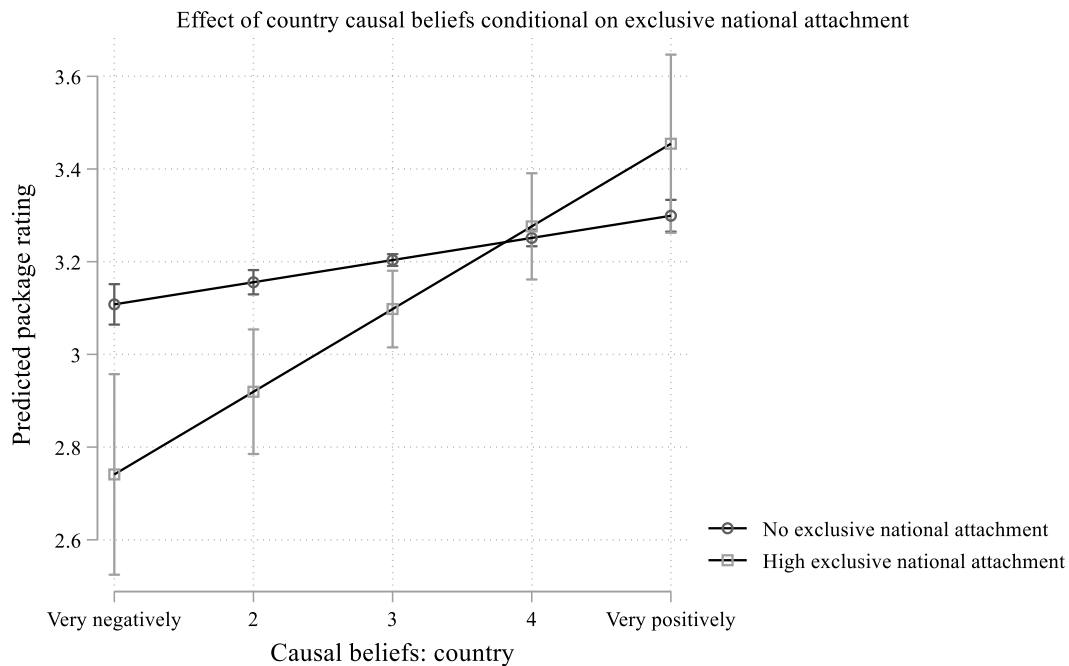


Figure 4

Lastly, figure 5 shows how the effect of causal beliefs for Europe change conditional on exclusive EU attachment. In this case, causal beliefs also have a stronger effect among those who to a larger extent feel attached to the EU, but in this case this interaction is not significant, leading to the refutation of hypothesis 3b.

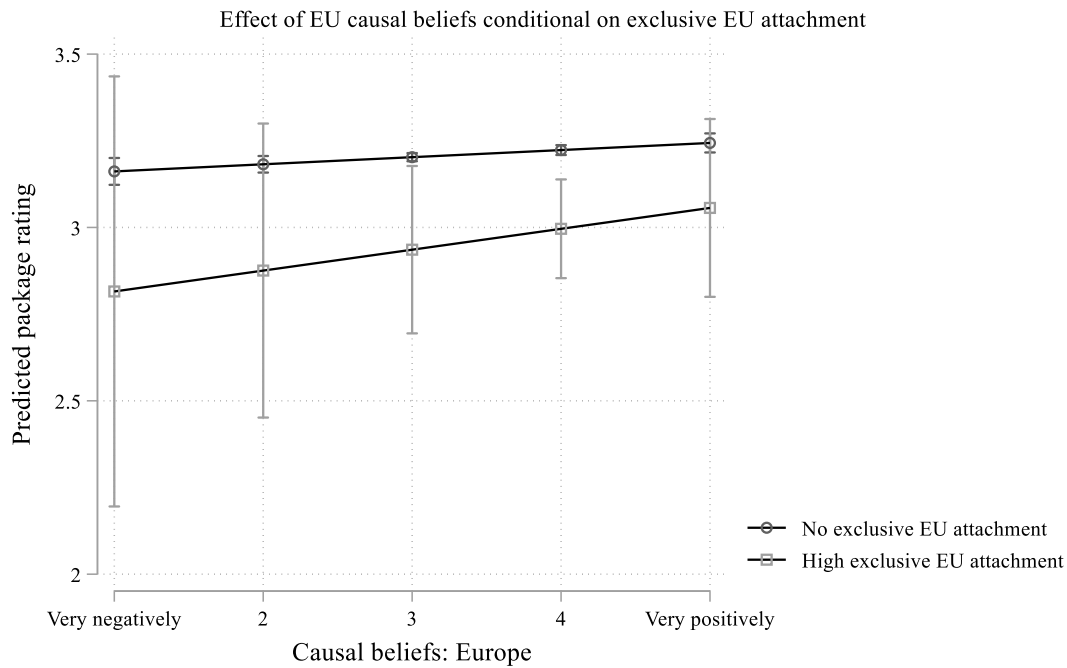


Figure 5

Robustness

The results presented above are robust across a series of alternative specifications. The results are virtually identical when no controls are included except for the dimension characteristics and country-level fixed effects; when the models are estimated using a mixed model with individuals nested in countries; or when using ordinal logistic regression. In addition, the main results do not change in a substantive way when the support variable (coded as 1 when the rating is 4 or 5, and 0 otherwise) is used for all models. However, under this specification the interaction between exclusive regional attachment and causal beliefs for the region are no longer significant. Nonetheless, the model specification used here should be considered superior as it uses the full variation of the source dependent variable.

An alternative test to the conditionality of the effect of causal beliefs is through exclusive identity (see section 3). In line with the results presented above, interacting exclusive national identity shows that causal beliefs for the nation are more important for those who exclusively identify with their nation than for those who do not, while an absence of exclusive identification with the nation does not increase the importance of causal beliefs for the EU.

Furthermore, as causal beliefs of the policy's effects are operationalised for the policy in general, while the level of support which forms the main dependent variable is based on alternative policy designs, it might be possible for the policy designs to which people have been exposed to influence their causal beliefs. This possibility has been tested by regressing the policy characteristics on causal beliefs, which shows that none of the dimensions significantly influenced causal beliefs for oneself or any of the levels.

Lastly, here egotropic and sociotropic concern are methodologically treated as orthogonal factors. However, it is worthwhile to investigate whether community-level causal beliefs are still influential under the condition that one perceives negative effects for oneself, and this approach can be tested with the data here by including an interaction term between causal beliefs for oneself and for the different levels of community. The results for this specification are shown in table A.3 and figure A.2 in the appendix. Under this specification, the average main effects of causal beliefs remain positive and significant. However, there is also a significant negative interaction between personal and country causal beliefs, wherein the effects of either of the two causal beliefs become statistically indistinguishably different from 0 when the other is at its highest level. This finding is discussed in more detail below.

5. Discussion & conclusion

Since the late 70's of the previous century, scholars have pondered the question as to whether political behaviour is motivated mainly by egotropic concern, or (also) by a genuine concern for the welfare of one's community. While during the subsequent decades these mechanisms have been investigated in detail, studies of the role of sociotropic concern in political attitudes toward the EU have remained surprisingly few and have substantial conceptual and methodological shortcomings. Those studies that have tried to investigate this mechanism in an EU context, or which show results that are indicative of such a mechanism, only consider the national level of community to be relevant and have not been capable of disentangling egotropic and sociotropic concern (Baute & Meuleman, 2020; Elkink et al., 2019; Kuhn & Stoeckel, 2014; Levy & Phan, 2014; Llamazares & Gramacho, 2007). However, these are both important shortcomings to overcome if we want to gain a better understanding of motivations for supporting EU policy. First, it seems highly plausible that other levels of community also take a central position in considerations for support, such as the regional and the EU

community. Hence overlooking these communities could lead us to incorrectly conclude sociotropic concern not to be a driving factor, or might us to overestimate the importance of concern with the national community. Second, finding out whether such concern is driven by a genuine concern for others' welfare, or whether attitudes instead result from an obfuscated concern for oneself, is essential as both hypotheses have fundamentally different implications for human political behaviour.

This study has set out to remedy both these shortcomings by investigating the role of sociotropic concern in support for the introduction of an EU fiscal capacity, operationalising egotropic and sociotropic concern through people's beliefs of how such a policy would affect themselves personally, their regional community, their national community, and the EU community as a whole. This approach simultaneously allows for multiple levels of community to play a role in considerations of the collective welfare. In addition, it also addresses the methodological shortcomings of previous research by not having to approximate egotropic and sociotropic concern from objective factors such as SES. But most importantly, by having people separate their perception of the policy's effects on themselves and on the different levels of community, egotropic and sociotropic concern can be disentangled and investigated as independent factors.

The analysis has shown that these distinct causal beliefs each have an independent effect on support for the policy. In other words, the stronger one believes the policy to positively (negatively) influence the welfare in the region, the nation, or the EU, the higher (lower) one's level of support for the policy – independent of positive or negative beliefs of the policy's effects for oneself. In addition, the magnitude of these community-level causal beliefs is quite substantial, as they are capable of swaying the level of support for the policy from 26.3 percent to 47.3 percent – again independent from egotropic concerns. As such, these findings clearly indicate that sociotropic concern, as a genuine concern for the collective welfare, influences support for an EU fiscal capacity.

In line with the expectation that people are primarily concerned with the welfare of the national community, causal beliefs for the nation had a stronger effect than causal beliefs for the region and the EU. Nonetheless, the latter two still do have an independent effect, showing that the regional and EU community nonetheless feature in people's considerations. This centrality of the multiple levels of community is further confirmed through the conditionality of these

community level causal beliefs on people's emotional attachment, as the interactions show that such causal beliefs are more important the more one exclusively attaches to the respective level of community. Figure 4 and 5 show that this dynamic in particular entails that people are more sensitive to negative causal beliefs, as among those who exclusively attach to their region or the nation expectations of negative effects of the policy on these respective level of community reduce the level of support substantially while it seems less so the case that among these people expectations of positive effects cause more support.

This paper provides three main contributions to our knowledge of public attitudes toward policy. First, this is to the authors' knowledge the first analysis that disentangles the effects of egotropic and sociotropic concern on support for an EU policy. Second, it is also the first analysis to simultaneously consider the three levels of community most likely to be relevant in considerations of EU policy. And third, this paper is unique in its explicit integration of political causal beliefs in an observational survey methodology, and it shows such an approach to have merit.

Beyond the fundamental contribution to the debate as to the nature of sociotropic concern, this paper also has important implications for the political debate concerning EU policy in general, and the debate on a fiscal capacity in particular. First, it has become clear that the majority of citizens in the countries included in the survey believe the policy to have no discernible effect on welfare, neither for themselves nor for their local, national or the EU community. Hence, there is a lot to gain EU politicians have substantial room for manoeuvre in swaying public opinion on the introduction of an EU fiscal capacity, especially considering the strong evidence of the benefits of such a policy for the EU economy and its participating countries. Second, the finding that sociotropic concern is a more important factor than egotropic concern in support for the policy indicates that politicians would do particularly well to stress the benefits that such a policy has on the collective wellbeing. And thirdly, as the results point out that people are sensitive to the welfare within their regional community, regional divides could form political cleavages that should be alleviated as much as possible by taking regional interests into account in policy design.

However, this paper also has limitations. First of all, since the data include six EU Member States, conclusions drawn as to the generalisability to other Member States are limited.

Nonetheless, it should be stressed that the countries included in the study covered the variety of EU Member States on a wide range of factors.

Second, while the operationalisation of causal beliefs has the merits outlined above, it might be the case that the role of sociotropic concern is more limited when people are faced with starker trade-offs between their personal interest and that of the community. While previous research has shown sociotropic concern to play a role also in such instances in an US context, future investigations should investigate whether this finding also transports to the EU context.

Thirdly, the finding that causal beliefs for the country and oneself are partially conditional on one another warrants some discussion. This is somewhat puzzling, as one would have rather expected the opposite: that causal beliefs for the country or the ego only become influential as soon as a satisfactory level of perceived effects (i.e. a neutral level at least) has been reached. Instead, this result suggests perceived positive effects for oneself and for the country to be partial substitutes. In other words, positive causal beliefs for the country have a stronger positive effect on support when causal beliefs for the ego are negative, and vice versa. One might argue that this finding points in the direction of obfuscated egotropic concern after all. However, in that light it is puzzling that community-level causal beliefs are influential independently of egotropic concern, as found in the main analysis. It should also be stressed that the effects of causal beliefs for the other two levels of community do not interact with egotropic concern. Investigating the consistency of this finding would be a good direction for future research. In particular, it would be interesting to see if it also holds when perceptions of a policy's effects are more explicit, such as in situations where participants have more information on the policy's effects.

In any case, the findings of this paper provide novel insight into political attitudes toward the EU and open up many venues for future inquiries. For example, it remains to be seen whether these results generalise to other policy contexts. Additionally, while this paper has focussed on types of community defined by geographical areas, communities relevant for people in their political attitudes might also be defined on the basis of other characteristics. And lastly, as causal beliefs are shown to have such a substantial impact on policy support, it would be interesting to see how in turn variation in those causal beliefs themselves could be explained.

Bibliography

- Alkon, M. (2017). *Local Sociotropism: How Community Variation in Trade Exposure Affects Voter Demands* (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 3103852). Social Science Research Network. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3103852>
- Baute, S., & Meuleman, B. (2020). Public attitudes towards a European minimum income benefit: How (perceived) welfare state performance and expectations shape popular support. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 30(4), 404–420. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928720904320>
- Bechtel, M. M., Hainmueller, J., & Margalit, Y. (2014). Preferences for International Redistribution: The Divide over the Eurozone Bailouts. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(4), 835–856. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12079>
- Bechtel, M. M., & Liesch, R. (2020). Reforms and Redistribution: Disentangling the Egoistic and Sociotropic Origins of Voter Preferences. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 84(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfaa006>
- Beetsma, R., Burgoon, B., Nicoli, F., de Ruijter, A., & Vandenbroucke, F. (2020). *What Kind of EU Fiscal Capacity? Evidence From a Randomized Survey Experiment in Five European Countries in Times of Corona* (SSRN Scholarly Paper ID 3668906). Social Science Research Network. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3668906>
- Beetsma, R., Burgoon, B., Nicoli, F., de Ruijter, A., & Vandenbroucke, F. (2021). Public support for European cooperation in the procurement, stockpiling and distribution of medicines. *European Journal of Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckaa201>
- Brinegar, A. P., Jolly, S. K., & Kitschelt, H. (2004). Varieties of Capitalism and Political Divides over European Integration. In G. Marks & M. R. Steenbergen, *European Integration and Political Conflict* (pp. 62–89). Cambridge University Press.
- Burgoon, B., Kuhn, T., Nicoli, F., & Vandenbroucke, F. (2022). Unemployment risk-sharing in the EU: How policy design influences citizen support for European unemployment policy. *European Union Politics*, 14651165221075252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14651165221075251>
- Chong, D., Citrin, J., & Conley, P. (2001). When Self-Interest Matters. *Political Psychology*, 22(3), 541–570. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00253>
- Deutschmann, E., Delhey, J., Verbalyte, M., & Aplowski, A. (2018). The power of contact: Europe as a network of transnational attachment. *European Journal of Political Research*, 57(4), 963–988. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12261>
- Díez Medrano, J., & Gutiérrez, P. (2001). Nested identities: National and European identity in Spain. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24(5), 753–778. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870120063963>
- Dolls, M., & Wehrhöfer, N. (2021). Attitudes towards euro area reforms: Evidence from a randomized survey experiment. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 67(101971).
- Elkink, J. A., Quinlan, S., & Sinnott, R. (2019). Economic Voting in EU Referendums: Sociotropic versus Egocentric Voting in the Lisbon Treaty Plebiscites in Ireland. *Politics and Governance*, 7(2), 334–350. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v7i2.1944>
- European Commission. (2017). *Reflection paper on the deepening of the economic and monetary union*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/reflection-paper-deepening-economic-and-monetary-union_en
- European Commission. (2020). *Proposal for a COUNCIL REGULATION on the establishment of a European instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE) following the COVID-19 outbreak*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020PC0139>
- Fiorina, M. P. (1981). *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*. Yale Univ Pr.
- Gerhards, J., Lengfeld, H., Ignác, Z. S., Kley, F. K., & Priem, M. (2019). *European Solidarity in Times of Crisis: Insights from a Thirteen-Country Survey*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429289453>
- Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2014). Public Attitudes Toward Immigration. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17(1), 225–249. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-102512-194818>
- Hainmueller, J., Hopkins, D. J., & Yamamoto, T. (2014). Causal Inference in Conjoint Analysis: Understanding Multidimensional Choices via Stated Preference Experiments. *Political Analysis*, 22(1), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpt024>
- Hix, S., Kaufmann, E., & Leeper, T. J. (2021). Pricing Immigration. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 8(1), 63–74. <https://doi.org/10.1017/XPS.2020.6>
- Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2005). Calculation, Community and Cues: Public Opinion on European Integration. *European Union Politics*, 6(4), 419–443. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1465116505057816>
- Johnston, R., Dorling, D., Tunstall, H., Rossiter, D., MacAllister, I., & Pattie, C. (2000). Locating the Altruistic Voter: Context, Egocentric Voting, and Support for the Conservative Party at the 1997 General Election in England and Wales. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 32(4), 673–694. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3294>
- Kertzer, J. D., Barbera, P., Guess, A., Munzert, S., Yang, J., & Zhou, A. (2019). *Trade Attitudes In The Wild*. 51.
- Kinder, D. R., & Kiewiet, D. R. (1981). Sociotropic Politics: The American Case. *British Journal of Political Science*, 11(2), 129–161.
- Klor, E. F., & Shayo, M. (2010). Social identity and preferences over redistribution. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(3), 269–278. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2009.12.003>
- Kramer, G. H. (1971). Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior, 1896–1964*. *American Political Science Review*, 65(1), 131–143. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1955049>

- Kramer, G. H. (1983). The Ecological Fallacy Revisited: Aggregate- versus Individual-level Findings on Economics and Elections, and Sociotropic Voting. *American Political Science Review*, 77(1), 92–111. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1956013>
- Kuhn, T., Nicoli, F., & Vandenbroucke, F. (2020). Preferences for European unemployment insurance: A question of economic ideology or EU support? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 27(2), 208–226. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2019.1701529>
- Kuhn, T., Solaz, H., & Elsas, E. J. van. (2018). Practising what you preach: How cosmopolitanism promotes willingness to redistribute across the European Union. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25(12), 1759–1778.
- Kuhn, T., & Stoeckel, F. (2014). When European integration becomes costly: The euro crisis and public support for European economic governance. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 21(4), 624–641. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2013.867892>
- Kustov, A. (2021). Borders of Compassion: Immigration Preferences and Parochial Altruism. *Comparative Political Studies*, 54(3–4), 445–481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414020938087>
- Levy, N., & Phan, B. (2014). The Utility of Identity: Explaining Support for the EU after the Crash. *Polity*, 46(4), 562–590. <https://doi.org/10.1057/pol.2014.19>
- Lewin, L. (1991). *Self-Interest and Public Interest in Western Politics*. OUP Oxford.
- Llamazares, I., & Gramacho, W. (2007). Eurosceptics Among Euroenthusiasts: An Analysis of Southern European Public Opinions. *Acta Politica*, 42(2), 211–232. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.ap.5500180>
- Mansfield, E. D., & Mutz, D. C. (2009). Support for Free Trade: Self-Interest, Sociotropic Politics, and Out-Group Anxiety. *International Organization*, 63(3), 425–457. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818309090158>
- Milanovic, B. (2015). Global Inequality of Opportunity: How Much of Our Income Is Determined by Where We Live? *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 97(2), 452–460. https://doi.org/10.1162/REST_a_00432
- Miller, D. (2008). Immigrants, Nations, and Citizenship*. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, 16(4), 371–390. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9760.2007.00295.x>
- Nicoli, F., Kuhn, T., & Burgoon, B. (2020). Collective Identities, European Solidarity: Identification Patterns and Preferences for European Social Insurance. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 58(1), 76–95. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.12977>
- Rho, S., & Tomz, M. (2017). Why Don't Trade Preferences Reflect Economic Self-Interest? *International Organization*, 71(S1), S85–S108. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818316000394>
- Rogers, J. (2014). A communitropic theory of economic voting. *Electoral Studies*, 36, 107–116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2014.08.004>
- Rogers, J., & Tyszler, M. (2018). Information and Economic Voting. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 6(4), 753–770. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2016.27>
- Rohrschneider, R. (1988). Citizens' Attitudes Toward Environmental Issues: Selfish or Selfless? *Comparative Political Studies*, 21(3), 347–367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414088021003002>
- Schaffer, L. M., & Spilker, G. (2019). Self-interest versus sociotropic considerations: An information-based perspective to understanding individuals' trade preferences. *Review of International Political Economy*, 26(6), 1266–1292. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2019.1642232>
- Schildkraut, D. J. (2014). Boundaries of American Identity: Evolving Understandings of “Us”. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17(1), 441–460. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-080812-144642>
- Shiell, A., & Seymour, J. (2002). Preferences for public health insurance: Egotism or altruism? *International Journal of Social Economics*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03068290210423505>
- Sigelman, L., Sigelman, C. K., & Bullock, D. (1991). Reconsidering Pocketbook Voting: An Experimental Approach. *Political Behavior*, 13(2), 129–149.
- Solodoch, O. (2021). Do Sociotropic Concerns Mask Prejudice? Experimental Evidence on the Sources of Public Opposition to Immigration. *Political Studies*, 69(4), 1009–1032. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321720946163>
- Stern, P. C., Dietz, T., & Kalof, L. (1993). Value Orientations, Gender, and Environmental Concern. *Environment and Behavior*, 25(5), 322–348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916593255002>
- Triandafyllidou, A. (2008). Popular perceptions of Europe and the Nation: The case of Italy. *Nations and Nationalism*, 14(2), 261–282. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2008.00321.x>
- Walsh, K. C. (2012). Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective. *American Political Science Review*, 106(3), 517–532. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055412000305>
- Whelan, C. T., & Maître, B. (2009). Europeanization of inequality and European reference groups. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 19(2), 117–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928708101865>
- Wratil, C., & Wäckerle, J. (2022). Majority representation and legitimacy: Survey-experimental evidence from the European Union. *European Journal of Political Research*, n/a(n/a). <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12507>

Appendix

Framing text

The framing of the conjoint experiment includes itself an additional experimental treatment. Half of the respondents was exposed to a frame that emphasised that EU Member States can be in need of temporary budgetary assistance in the event of a temporary economic downturn, while the other half of the respondents was exposed to a frame that emphasised the need for continuing assistance in the event of long-term economic challenges. This additional experiment is of limited relevance for the purposes of this paper, but nonetheless both framing texts are shown here.

Frame 1:

European governments spend money on policies such as infrastructure, education, social assistance, military defence, housing, etc. When a country is hit by a severe but temporary economic downturn, it can be difficult to maintain these policies during the downturn.

We would like to hear your opinion about a new European programme discussed by European governments to address such difficulty. This new programme would provide temporary budget support to countries in need. Such support would never be larger than 1% of the receiving country's GDP.

The budget support would help governments maintain their policies during the economic downturn and stabilize the economic situation. This mutual assistance programme would be financed by the participating countries.

This European assistance programme can be organized in different ways. Different conditions can be imposed on countries that benefit from the support. Therefore, in the next pages you will be shown alternative options. You will be asked to indicate which options you prefer (or dislike the least), and how much you are in favour or against these proposals.

Frame 2:

European governments spend money on policies such as infrastructure, education, social assistance, military defence, housing, etc. However, when a country is confronted with long-

lasting economic problems (such as a permanent decline in an important industrial sector), it can be difficult to maintain these policies.

We would like to hear your opinion about a new European programme discussed by European governments to address such difficulty. This new programme would provide budget support to countries in need. Such support would never be larger than 1% of the receiving country's GDP.

The budget support would help governments in maintaining their policies and to address these long-lasting economic problems. The mutual assistance provided by this programme would be financed by the participating countries.

This European assistance programme can be organized in different ways. Different conditions can be imposed on countries that benefit from the support. Therefore, in the next pages you will be shown alternative options. You will be asked to indicate which options you prefer (or dislike the least), and how much you are in favour or against these proposals.

Question wording

Community attachment: 'On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 means totally unattached, and 10 means very attached), how attached do you feel with respect to ...', with respondents answering this question

Your local community

Your {#regional_denomination}

{#country_noun}

Europe

General political ideology: 'In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". On a scale from 0 to 10, where would you place yourself, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?'

Exclusive national identity: 'Do you see yourself as ...?'

- 1) [specific country adjective inserted] only
- 2) [specific country adjective inserted] and European
- 3) European and [specific country adjective inserted]
- 4) European only

Full community attachment results

Table A.1. Regression of support for fiscal capacity by exclusive attachment, full results

| | Model 1: localist | | Model 2: national | | Model 3: European | | Model 4: interactions | |
|---|-------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|-------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| | B | s.e. | B | s.e. | B | s.e. | B | s.e. |
| Causal beliefs: ego | 0.077*** | (0.022) | 0.103*** | (0.017) | 0.052 | (0.031) | 0.078*** | (0.009) |
| Causal beliefs: region | 0.052* | (0.021) | 0.010 | (0.016) | 0.010 | (0.036) | 0.023* | (0.010) |
| Causal beliefs: country | 0.073*** | (0.019) | 0.077*** | (0.014) | -0.007 | (0.031) | 0.048*** | (0.009) |
| Causal beliefs: Europe | -0.031 | (0.017) | 0.038** | (0.014) | 0.058* | (0.027) | 0.021* | (0.008) |
| Exclusive local attachment | | | | | | | -0.061* | (0.026) |
| Exclusive local attachment # Causal beliefs: region | | | | | | | 0.015* | (0.007) |
| Exclusive national attachment | | | | | | | -0.050** | (0.017) |
| Exclusive national attachment # Causal beliefs: country | | | | | | | 0.013* | (0.005) |
| Exclusive EU attachment | | | | | | | -0.039 | (0.042) |
| Exclusive EU attachment # Causal beliefs: Europe | | | | | | | 0.004 | (0.011) |
| Age | -0.001 | (0.001) | -0.001** | (0.001) | -0.002 | (0.001) | -0.002*** | (0.000) |
| Income: low | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) |
| Income: middle | -0.041 | (0.030) | 0.037 | (0.023) | 0.055 | (0.053) | -0.019 | (0.013) |
| Income: high | -0.049 | (0.036) | 0.008 | (0.026) | 0.041 | (0.050) | -0.029* | (0.015) |
| Income: refused | -0.072 | (0.046) | 0.006 | (0.037) | -0.069 | (0.080) | -0.054** | (0.020) |
| Gender | -0.017 | (0.025) | 0.005 | (0.019) | 0.034 | (0.042) | -0.011 | (0.011) |
| Education level | -0.000 | (0.007) | -0.014** | (0.005) | 0.001 | (0.010) | -0.006* | (0.003) |
| General ideology | -0.010 | (0.006) | 0.003 | (0.005) | 0.008 | (0.009) | 0.001 | (0.002) |
| Exclusive nationalist | -0.071* | (0.028) | 0.009 | (0.020) | -0.099 | (0.097) | -0.007 | (0.013) |
| Conjoint framing | -0.012 | (0.025) | 0.003 | (0.018) | 0.022 | (0.038) | -0.004 | (0.010) |
| Constant | 2.740*** | (0.109) | 2.335*** | (0.091) | 2.447*** | (0.204) | 2.584*** | (0.049) |
| Observations | | 7830 | | 14718 | | 2868 | | 45024 |
| Adjusted R-squared | | 0.052 | | 0.058 | | 0.046 | | 0.051 |

Note: standard errors in parentheses; conjoint dimension effects and country fixed effects suppressed from output; standard errors clustered on the individual level

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Robustness

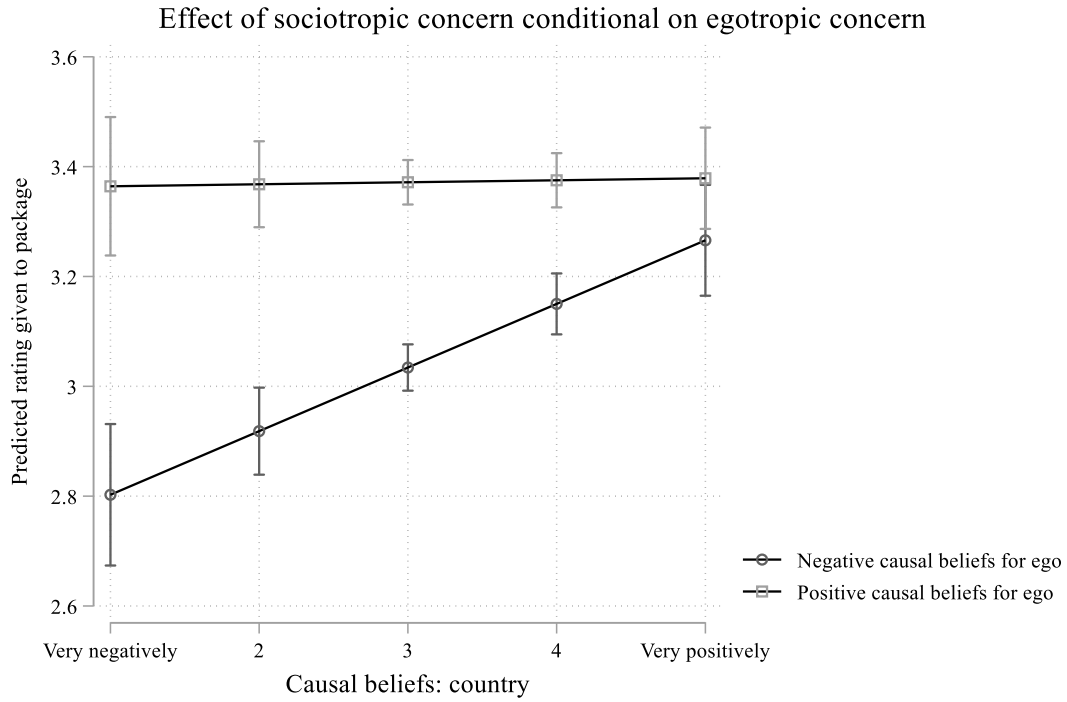
Interaction between egotropic and sociotropic concern

Table A.2. Regression of support for fiscal capacity on community causal beliefs conditional on ego causal beliefs.

| | Only negative causal beliefs for ego | | Only positive or neutral causal beliefs for ego | | Full interaction term, support variable | | Full interaction term, full rating variable | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------|---|---------|---|---------|---|---------|
| | B | s.e. | B | s.e. | B | s.e. | B | s.e. |
| Causal beliefs: ego | | | | | 0.019 | (0.010) | 0.202*** | (0.030) |
| Causal beliefs: region | 0.021* | (0.010) | 0.024*** | (0.004) | -0.006 | (0.015) | 0.018 | (0.039) |
| Causal beliefs: country | 0.032*** | (0.009) | 0.020*** | (0.004) | 0.034* | (0.015) | 0.144*** | (0.040) |
| Causal beliefs: Europe | 0.009 | (0.007) | 0.028*** | (0.004) | 0.020 | (0.011) | 0.059 | (0.033) |
| Causal beliefs: ego # | | | | | 0.006 | (0.005) | 0.003 | (0.012) |
| Causal beliefs: region # | | | | | | | | |
| Causal beliefs: ego # | | | | | -0.005 | (0.005) | -0.028* | (0.013) |
| Causal beliefs: country # | | | | | | | | |
| Causal beliefs: ego # | | | | | 0.000 | (0.004) | -0.013 | (0.010) |
| Causal beliefs: Europe # | | | | | | | | |
| Age | 0.000 | (0.000) | 0.000 | (0.000) | 0.000 | (0.000) | -0.001*** | (0.000) |
| Income: low | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) | 0.000 | (.) |
| Income: middle | 0.008 | (0.017) | -0.006 | (0.007) | -0.004 | (0.006) | -0.021 | (0.013) |
| Income: high | 0.007 | (0.020) | -0.011 | (0.008) | -0.008 | (0.007) | -0.034* | (0.015) |
| Income: refused | -0.030 | (0.030) | -0.056*** | (0.012) | -0.053*** | (0.011) | -0.058** | (0.020) |
| Gender | 0.007 | (0.014) | -0.020*** | (0.006) | -0.016** | (0.005) | -0.012 | (0.010) |
| Education level | -0.000 | (0.004) | 0.005** | (0.002) | 0.004** | (0.001) | -0.006* | (0.003) |
| General ideology | 0.003 | (0.003) | 0.000 | (0.001) | 0.001 | (0.001) | 0.002 | (0.002) |
| Exclusive nationalist | -0.051*** | (0.015) | -0.002 | (0.007) | -0.011 | (0.006) | -0.004 | (0.013) |
| Constant | 0.179*** | (0.051) | 0.053* | (0.023) | 0.070* | (0.034) | 2.150*** | (0.102) |
| Observations | 7098 | | 37926 | | 45024 | | 45024 | |
| Adjusted R-squared | 0.026 | | 0.039 | | 0.039 | | 0.052 | |

Note: standard errors in parentheses; conjoint dimension effects and country fixed effects suppressed from output; standard errors clustered on the individual level

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001



Interaction with identity

Table A.3. Regression of support for fiscal capacity on causal beliefs conditional on identity

| | Base model | | Identity as ordinal | |
|---|------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | B | s.e. | B | s.e. |
| Causal beliefs: ego | 0.023*** | (0.004) | 0.022*** | (0.004) |
| Causal beliefs: region | 0.012** | (0.004) | 0.012** | (0.004) |
| Causal beliefs: country | 0.019*** | (0.004) | 0.048*** | (0.009) |
| Identification with country vs EU # Causal beliefs: country | | | -0.016*** | (0.005) |
| Causal beliefs: Europe | 0.021*** | (0.003) | 0.012 | (0.009) |
| Identification with country vs EU # Causal beliefs: Europe | | | 0.005 | (0.005) |
| Identification with country vs EU | 0.004 | (0.004) | 0.040** | (0.015) |
| Constant | 0.045* | (0.021) | -0.018 | (0.033) |
| Observations | 45024 | | 45024 | |
| Adjusted R-squared | 0.039 | | 0.039 | |

Note: standard errors in parentheses; conjoint dimension effects and country fixed effects suppressed from output; standard errors clustered on the individual level

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Effect of country- and EU-level causal beliefs conditional on identity

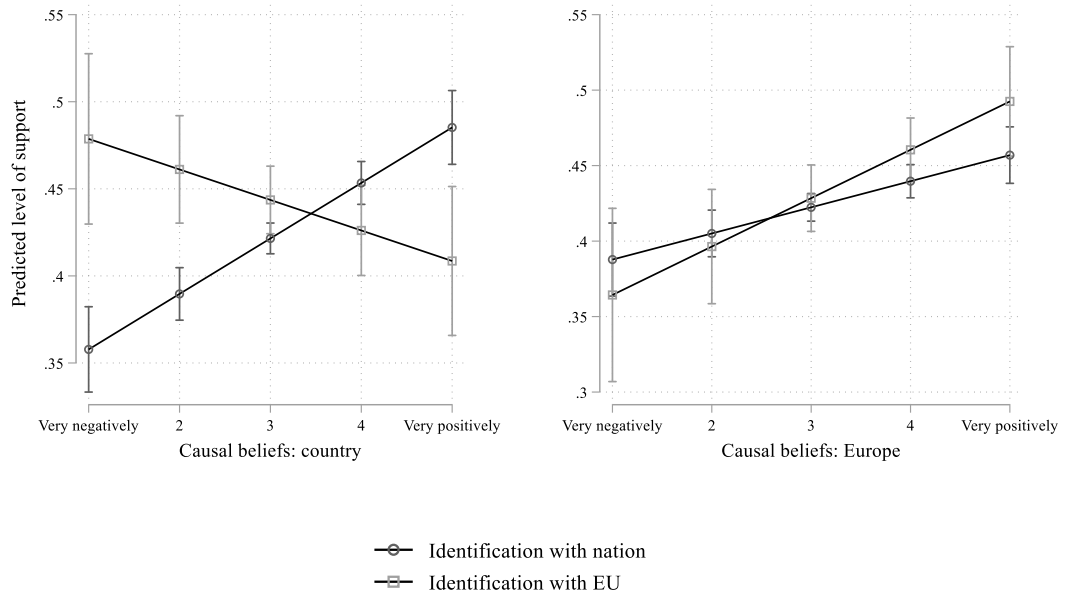


Figure A.2