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Framing the Basic Income: An Experimental Study of How Arguments and Metaphors Influence Individuals' Opinion Formation

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Abstract:
Using an experimental design, this paper tackles the question of the framing impact of metaphors by focusing on the opportunity to implement a basic income (BI) system in a given polity. We take advantage of the preliminary stage of the BI debate in Belgium to study the influence of discursive strategies on the opinion formation process of individuals, since carefully choosing the arguments employed to address this question can help increase its psychological feasibility. Our experiment aims at determining to what extent the confrontation of individuals to metaphors illustrating the BI system impacts the way they apprehend its implementation. We show that very light variations in an informative text can induce major differences in the opinion formation process of the participants. BI proponents should thus pay attention to which metaphors are put forward in the public debate, as this could modify its outcome.

Keywords: basic income, experiment, framing, metaphors, political discourse

1 Introduction

Nowadays it is difficult to speak about the Welfare State's future without bringing up the issue of the Basic Income (BI)[1]. The BI can be defined as "a regular cash income paid to all, on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement" (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, p. 1). Scholars actively address the question of its legitimacy (Tobin, 1965; Belorgey, 2000; Maniquet & Neumann, 2016). A key question is how the public reacts to the BI and more specifically what does influence individuals' opinions. Chong and Druckman (2007a) have shown the importance of *framing* in explaining changes of opinions. Such framing effects occur when changes in the presentation of a particular issue induce the reorientation of individuals' opinions through the development of a particular conceptualization of this issue. In this wake, Bougher (2012) highlighted that how citizens develop their opinions strongly depends on how they are framed and that metaphors play a key role in this mechanism. Studies in cognitive linguistics have demonstrated that metaphors are a central component of human cognition (Johnson, 2010, p. 412) because of their potential to frame a debate (Lakoff, 2004) and indirectly convey hidden ideologies (Goatly, 2007). Metaphors can be seen as helping people to construct particular aspects of reality and reproduce dominant schemas by drawing from previous knowledge and experience in other domains (Bougher, 2012; Koller, 2009). Metaphors therefore appear to be a key component of framing.

Against this background, this study seeks to uncover how different types of metaphors tackling the issue of the BI influence the opinions of French-speaking Belgian citizens. In Belgium, the debate about the BI is at a preliminary stage[2] and offers rich empirical material to analyse the impact of arguments and metaphors on the way citizens organise their reasoning about specific political issues (cf. *opinion formation process*). More precisely, the objective of this article is twofold. First, the study aims to empirically analyse the link between political discourse and the formation of opinions by individuals. It thus contributes to the growing debate in cognitive linguistics regarding the impact of metaphors on political reasoning. Second, the research also participates in the current debate of the political feasibility of BI implementation. In this regard, the article draws on the theoretical framework of De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012) who question the political feasibility of the BI. They more particularly stressed that the way the BI proposal is framed may significantly increase its *psychological feasibility* for the recipient. Therefore, carefully choosing the arguments presented to an audience

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1

could avoid triggering negative perceptions and ensure positive attitudes towards the policy at stake. This is especially true for the implementation of radical reforms, such as the BI, since the concept can be considered as abstract and ambiguous (Perkiö, 2012).

To measure the impact of metaphors and the legitimation process of the BI, the study relies on a *discursive approach* (Liebig & Mau, 2002) and runs an *experimental survey*. The choice for an experimental research design is motivated by two main arguments. First, running an experiment is the only way to produce data offering a distinct measuring of the impact of an independent variable on the dependent variable. It allows for strong causal inference since researchers can manipulate the variables of interest while controlling the effects of other intervening factors. The mechanism under study is thus isolated from external influences and can be thoroughly investigated. Moreover, the features of an experimental design are well suited for theory-testing, which corresponds to the goal of this research that is empirically analysing the link between characteristics of political discourse and individuals' opinion formation. Our experimental research's findings show that very light variations in an informative text can induce major differences in the opinion formation process of individuals. This indicates that, when a debate is controversial and ambiguous, citizens' opinions are sensitive to framing effects. BI proponents or opponents should thus pay particular attention to the arguments and metaphors that are put forward in the public debate.

The rest of the article is organised as follows. Section 2 presents the analytical framework of the study, discusses the political feasibility of basic income implementation and tackles the framing impact of arguments and metaphors on the opinion formation process of individuals. In Section 3, the research's experimental design as well as the method of analysis are introduced. Section 4 provides a detailed presentation of the major findings of the experiment. The article ends with a discussion of our results and provides avenues for further research.

2 The psychological feasibility of the basic income and the framing impact of metaphors

The psychological feasibility of the BI

While debates on the BI often explore its *political feasibility* (i. e. whether it could be implemented), its *psychological feasibility* (De Wispelaere et al., 2012) should also be investigated. It raises the question of how to convince the public opinion "that the BI is a normatively attractive and practically effective policy" (De Wispelaere et al., 2012, p. 27). How the BI proposal is framed may therefore significantly increase its psychological feasibility. A careful choice of arguments could thus avoid triggering negative perceptions towards the policy at stake. Further than arguments, the use of metaphors is also recognised as potentially affecting how individuals form their opinion and, *in fine*, their political preferences (Perrez & Reuchamps, 2015a). In this way, metaphors could thus play a role in either enhancing or weakening the psychological feasibility of the BI.

This article precisely examines how the usage of different arguments and metaphors to frame the BI issue affects its *psychological feasibility*. This question is particularly relevant as the public opinion towards the BI is volatile given the high level of abstraction of the concept and its ambiguous nature. Our research question unfolds thus as follows: *does the type of framing of the Basic Income issue affect its psychological feasibility among citizens?*

Different arguments for different impacts on the psychological feasibility of the BI?

The ambiguous nature of the BI allows to assess how political opinions are built in a controversial and not emotionally connoted debate. The inherent ambiguity of the BI concept is both a strength and a weakness when addressing its political feasibility (Barry, 1996a; Perkiö, 2012). While it leads to substantial disagreement concerning normative principles among its advocates, it also gathers support across political cleavages (De Wispelaere & Stirton, 2004). Yet, taking a clear position towards the BI is not necessarily a winning decision (De Wispelaere & Stirton, 2013): when it allows gathering support among targeted social groups, it also encourages a stronger opposition from other groups who feel disadvantaged (De Wispelaere, 2015b). This situation is commonly known as the *first-mover cost* (De Wispelaere et al., 2012) and can push decision-makers to hide operational considerations under a *veil of vagueness* in order to avoid suffering from a political cost linked to a too marked positioning (De Wispelaere, 2015a).

In addition, Koistinen and Perkiö emphasise that "different BI proposals appeal to different values" (2014, p. 37), highlighting the potential impact of cultural factors on the *psychological feasibility* of the BI. According to them, aligning the discursive battle to the targeted political agents' values can improve the achievability

of the BI. Therefore, the political discourse and the type of arguments used by policy-makers are of primary importance. By setting the words of the debate, political agents would be able to shape the general opinion and to increase the *psychological feasibility* of the project. On this matter, Van Parijs et al. (2017) highlight that this is particularly important when focusing on the BI since citizens can easily confuse the concept with related ideas. In this vein, our contribution supports the idea that the formation of opinion is likely to be influenced by the arguments used to describe the BI. In practice, the participants were asked to write a short argumentative text on the BI–considered in this case as the benchmark of how they form their opinion. In accordance with framing theory (Chong et al., 2007a), we expected them to articulate the argumentative text differently depending on the type of arguments they had been exposed to. As Chong and Druckman (2007b) explain, the framing effect results from a recalibration of the beliefs already associated with the issue, or from their acceptance of the new framed considerations as being the most salient. Frames are influencing individuals' opinions by emphasising the saliency of certain aspects over others. Highlighting the usage of specific arguments by respondents thus helps to bring out the direction given by the frame to their reasoning about BI.

The main philosophical arguments in favour of the BI can be grouped in three distinct approaches (Vanderborght, 2004)[3]. The first approach brings together the proponents of a BI justified by each individual's unconditional and natural right to have access to a sufficient amount of common resources to be able to survive (Meade, 1989; Steiner, 1992). This approach relates to the works of forerunners like Thomas Paine (1796) or Charles Fourier (Cunliffe & Erreygers, 2001) who stressed an essential characteristic of the BI, namely the unconditionality of treatment it represents. The second approach adopts a Marxist point of view and is illustrated by the article of Van der Veen and Van Parijs "*A Capitalist road to Communism*" (1986). In this contribution, the authors consider the BI as a tool allowing capitalist societies that have reached a certain level of abundance to maximise the resources shared with everyone according to their needs. What differentiates these two approaches is the focus of their proponents' arguments. While the first approach disregards the efficiency imperative according to which a public policy aims to change the behaviour of a targeted population, the second approach pursues the goal of achieving a society that more efficiently allocates the entire social product without considering the personal contribution of each individual to its production. On this matter, the position of Van Parijs (1998) evolved and now serves as the theoretical background for the third and last approach: the liberal-egalitarian perspective. It finds its roots in the Rawlsian conception of justice (Rawls, 2009) and aims to introduce a BI to its highest sustainable level to maximise the real freedom of individuals, yet without giving the State a prominent role (Vanderborght, 2004; Van Parijs, 1998). Besides Van Parijs, the liberal-egalitarian approach is also supported by other authors like, among others, Prats (1996), Blais (1999) or Birnbaum (2012).

This research focuses most particularly on the arguments developed by the liberal-egalitarian approach[4]. Indeed, nowadays this approach is the most commonly used in the literature and more specifically in Belgian French-speaking public and political contexts. The liberal-egalitarian approach thus constitutes the theoretical basis on which the various conditions of our experimental design were developed and on which the coding book that has been used for the analysis has been constructed. As detailed in the method section, our coding book has nevertheless been adapted during the analysis to take other arguments which were developed by the participants into account and which related to the first two philosophical approaches in favour of the BI. These were therefore not completely excluded from the analysis.

Two complementary sets of arguments originating from the liberal-egalitarian approach were identified: the *unconditionality* and *freedom for all* arguments[5]. Van Parijs (1998) argues that the distribution of an equal and *unconditional* income at its highest sustainable level possible to all individuals within the society (Barry, 1996b; Vanderborght, 2004) is the only means to achieve a real *freedom for all*. We therefore consider the argument of unconditionality as turning the debate towards *the conditions* of the BI implementation. Indeed, as developed in the section presenting the coding in detail, debates on the *unconditional* aspect of the BI lead to questions about the level of inclusiveness of the BI. More specifically: who and under which conditions can citizens be entitled to receive the BI? Following the same reasoning, the freedom argument is expected to raise concerns about *the consequences* of such a reform. As explained by van der Veen (1998), presenting the BI with arguments related to the freedom of individuals hits a central norm of our societies as it decouples wages and work (i. e. BI) (Standing, 2002). Consequently, the shift induced by the BI could have consequences on how societies function and increase demotivation to work. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H1a: If the informative text contains the unconditionality argument, it is likely that the participants' argumentative texts will contain arguments related to the **conditions** of the BI implementation.

H1b: If the informative text contains the freedom argument, it is likely that the participants' argumentative texts will contain arguments related to the **consequences** of the BI implementation.

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The framing impact of metaphors: reinforcing the arguments?

Metaphors are defined as a "cognitive mechanism [which] enables citizens to make sense of the political world by drawing from previous knowledge and experience in non-political domains" (Bougher, 2012, p. 145). Cognitive linguistics demonstrated that metaphors are a central component of human cognition, being "a central cognitive process for abstract conceptualization and reasoning" (Johnson, 2010, p. 412). Through a heuristic process, individuals rely on realities they master to understand a new situation in an environment that is much less familiar to them (Kövecses, 2010).

This article analyses the influence that metaphors can exert on the political decision-making process of citizens. Metaphors are central in politics as they have the potential to frame the debate (Lakoff, 2004) and indirectly convey hidden ideologies (Goatly, 2007). In line with Chong's and Druckman's (2007a) definition, framing can more specifically be defined as "[...] select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] it more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the described item" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Through framing, a "metaphor helps construct particular aspects of reality and reproduce (or subvert) dominant schemas" (Koller, 2009). In this regard, numerous studies showed the importance of metaphors in political discourses (Reuchamps & Perez, 2012), including elite discourse (see for instance Charteris-Black, 2011, 2013; Debras & L'Hôte, 2015; L'Hôte, 2012), media discourse (Musolff, 2004) or citizen discourse (Perrez & Reuchamps, 2012, 2014, 2015b).

However, the impact of metaphors is often taken for granted by scholars, as if the production of a particular metaphor *automatically* triggered different representations of a given entity (Perrez & Reuchamps, 2015c). In addition, little is known on the exact impact of metaphors, at least empirically. On the one hand, empirical studies of Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011, 2013, 2015) confirm the influential role of metaphors on reasoning. They found out that "even minimal (one-word) metaphors can significantly shift people's representations and reasoning about important real-life domains" (Thibodeau et al., 2011, p. 10). On the other hand, Steen, Reijnierse, and Burgers (2014) questioned Thibodeau and Boroditsky's conclusions by highlighting a series of methodological pitfalls[6] and hence designed a new version of the experimental design used by Thibodeau and Boroditsky to tackle their methodological weaknesses. The results of their study do not show any effects of metaphorical frames.

These contrasting results suggest that the framing function of metaphors should not be considered as an automatic process. In line with the metaphors' framing impact theories (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011, 2013, 2015), this article argues that the presence of metaphors in an informative text would increase the occurrence of the expected arguments already advanced by the participants from the related non-metaphorical groups. In other words, we expect the participants from the metaphorical conditions to refer more frequently to these arguments, in comparison with the participants from non-metaphorical conditions. As already highlighted, we consider a framing effect to occur as a result either of a recalibration of the participants' beliefs that were already linked with the framed issue or of the participants' acceptance that the newly framed issue is more convincing than how it was previously framed (Chong et al., 2007b). By easing people's understanding of political concepts, metaphors are thus expected to be more powerful than arguments alone and so doing to exert a greater framing impact than regular arguments commonly used in any political discourse. The second hypothesis stems from this reasoning.

H2: If the informative text contains a metaphor, it is likely that the participants' argumentative texts will contain the arguments emphasised by the metaphor. They will do so in a greater fashion than respondents who read the informative text containing the same arguments but without the metaphor.

3   Method and coding schemes

An experimental design

The use of an experimental design answers to the call of scholars like Noguera and De Wispelaere (2006) to develop the use of experiments in the study of the BI. By addressing the psychological feasibility of the BI through the study of the opinion formation process (Camerer & Loewenstein, 2004), the experiment is in line with research designs providing a better understanding of the challenges posed by the BI. In addition, experimental designs are well suited to analyse the political discourse's framing impact on individuals' opinion formation processes. Indeed, such a design allows us to isolate the impact of some of the discourse's elements (in our case, the arguments and the metaphors).

The experiment was conducted in 2015 among 686 first-year students from two French-speaking Belgian universities (Université catholique de Louvain and Université de Liège) originating from different disciplines (economics and management, social and political sciences, linguistics and literature, or communication)[7]. Given that the sample is entirely composed of students, the usage of certain arguments could be impacted. For example, students could be more attracted by arguments linked to the idea of freedom than workers could be, since these have already experienced the reciprocity bond that unites social contributors. Although this potential bias does not affect the empirical demonstration that arguments and metaphors can influence the opinion formation processes of citizens, it must be taken into consideration when interpreting the descriptive results figuring the frequency of arguments used by our participants. To put it differently, we seek in the first place to identify the existence of a causal mechanism and not yet its generalisation towards the overall population.

The experiment was based on an informative text discussing the potential implementation of a BI system in Belgium and originates from an article of the Belgian newspaper *Le Soir* (29 July 2015). Box 1 introduces the text displayed to the respondents.

Box 1:
Text displayed to the respondents (own translation from French).
Some people propose the idea of a universal grant, also called–depending on the country – basic income, unconditional basic income or citizen's income, which can be defined as: "an income *paid by a political community to all its members, on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirements*".
[We could see it as (ARGUMENT/METAPHOR)]
Although this idea has long been connected to a gentle utopia entertained by intellectuals (but supported by numerous Nobel Prizes in Economic Sciences), it slowly gained ground. It has punctually been tested in Canada, the United States, India; has been launched by Lula in Brazil; in Alaska, it exists by means of a redistribution of oil profits of the state.
In our country, the debate is underway. And you, what do you think?

To test the impact of arguments and metaphors on the opinion formation process of French-speaking Belgian citizens, slightly modified versions of the original article were submitted to the respondents. These were randomly distributed in seven experimental conditions: a control condition, a neutral condition, two "argument" conditions and three "metaphor" conditions that reflect frequently used metaphors in the context of the BI debate in Belgium (see Table 1). Answering the criticisms of Steen et al. (2014) on Thibodeau and Boroditsky's results (2011, 2013, 2015), the first condition is a control group. This group did not receive any stimulus (i. e. no text, no argument, no metaphor). It is by comparing the answers of this group to the other groups that the impact of a text, additional arguments or metaphors can be assessed. The second condition is the original article (i. e. the neutral group). This condition allows to control whether the original text–without any additional arguments or metaphors–has an impact on the opinion formation process of citizens. For the third and sixth conditions, *arguments* in favour of the BI and related to either freedom for all or the unconditional nature of the BI were added to the original article. Finally, the conditions 4, 5 and 7 were used to assess the effect of specific *metaphors*. In this respect, a "base frame" metaphor and a "springboard" metaphor stressing the argument of freedom and a "pocket money" metaphor linked to the notion of unconditionality were produced. These metaphors were selected for the experiment as they are often used in debates on the BI in Belgium. Each metaphor was reinforced by one metaphorical word in the rest of the text in order to emphasise the metaphorical frame. Table 1 summarises the conditions of our experiment.

Table 1: Design of the experiment.

Condition	Additional sentence	N
Group 1: *Control*	No text	98
Group 2: *Neutral text*	Original article, no additional sentence	98
Group 3: *Argument (Freedom)*	"We could see it as an income supplied by the State so that citizens can freely live their life without having to be concerned about material constraints."	104
Group 4: *Metaphor (Base frame)*	"We could see it as a base frame supplied by the State so that the citizens can build their life freely without having to be concerned about material constraints."	95
Group 5: *Metaphor (Springboard)*	"We could see it as a springboard supplied by the State so that the citizens can freely launch themselves into life without any material constraints."	99
Group 6: *Argument (Unconditionality)*	"We could see it as an income that citizens receive from the State by the very fact that they are members of it."	97

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Group 7: *Metaphor (Pocket money)*	"We could see it as <u>pocket money</u> that citizens receive from the State like <u>children</u> receive it by the very fact that they are members of the <u>family</u>."	95

The analysis was conducted in three main steps. First, the participants were asked – after having read the informative text on BI – to explain what the BI meant for them. Based on a codebook, the respondents' answers were coded[8]. Taking the multidimensional nature of the answer into account, several codes were allocated to each answer. Second, the differences in the codes' frequency between the seven groups were quantitatively analysed. The study examined if the participants' usage of some arguments in their text could be a consequence of the arguments/metaphors they had been exposed to. The fact that participants from the treatment groups used some arguments/metaphors in a more widespread way than the control and neutral groups demonstrates a framing impact of these particular arguments and/or metaphors. Chi-square tests were also performed to distinguish between random occurrences and repeated regularities. Finally, we qualitatively investigated why some differences emerged across coding categories.

Codebook: Qualitatively assessing the respondents' answers

Our codebook consists of eight dimensions detailed into specific codes (see appendix for a description of the most frequent codes). The dimensions that have been covered are: **(1)** the participant's *position* towards the BI (positive, negative or neutral); **(2)** the *concepts* used by the participants (e. g. utopia or equality); **(3)** the *geographical scale* envisaged for the BI (e. g. supranational level, Belgium, Regions or communities, local); **(4)** the *temporality* of the BI (e. g. monthly, yearly, …); **(5)** how to *finance* the BI (e. g. through tax or social security); **(6)** any appraisal to the *Belgian current situation* (e. g. functioning of Belgium on various fields–economy, society, politics–and/or a positive or negative appraisal of the situation). Finally, the dimensions **(7)** and **(8)** refer more specifically to the types of *arguments* used by the participants, whether on the *conditions* of the BI implementation (unconditionality argument) or on the *consequences* of its implementation (freedom for all argument). To ensure that the codebook covers all the nuances colouring the different arguments that can be found in favour or against the BI, we relied (a) on a review of the literature (b) on the commonly used arguments in the public debate by Belgian French-speaking political elites and the media and (c) on an inductive iterative process during the analysis of the respondents' answers.

Regarding the last two dimensions of our codebook, different types of arguments related to the *freedom for all* and *unconditional* nature of the BI were identified. The argumentation can either be driven by *normative considerations* mainly based on claims about values, standards of justice and legitimacy or by *pragmatic considerations* that find their roots in claims about decisions' outputs on the gain or loss of political, legal and economic resources (Wendler, 2016). Distinguishing both discursive frameworks clarifies the various arguments underlying the debate about the BI. It also allows to identify the types of arguments that are the most important when it comes to driving individuals' opinion processes concerning the potential BI implementation. Therefore, the distinction between normative and pragmatic considerations will also structure this paper's discussion. The codes (conveyed in small caps) are organised in Table 2 according to both the main argument they relate to and the type of considerations (normative vs. pragmatic). The following paragraphs provide an overview of these codes based on the literature on the BI debate.

Table 2: Normative and pragmatic arguments related to the freedom for all and unconditional nature of BI.

	Unconditionality	Freedom for all
Normative	BASIC NEEDS, NATURAL RIGHT, EQUALITY/EQUITY, SITUATION −, SOCIAL −, UNDERPRIVILEGED PEOPLE, ECONOMIC CRISIS, TAXES, SOCIAL SECURITY −, SOCIAL SECURITY +, ECONOMIC−	CONSEQUENCES − ,FREE RIDERS,SITUATION − ,FUNDING
Pragmatic	ACCESS, UNCONDITIONAL, CONDITIONS, DISCRIMINATION, MEMBERSHIP CONDITION, CITIZENSHIP CONDITION, RESIDENTIAL CONDITION, SCALE, NATIONAL LEVEL, UNIVERSAL	CONSEQUENCES, CONSEQUENCES +, CONSEQUENCES −, LIBERTY +, OPPORTUNITIES, QUALITY +, BASIC NEEDS, REINTEGRATION, TEMPORALITY

With regard to the unconditionality argument, seven normative considerations and 13 pragmatic considerations were identified. Focusing on *the normative dimension*, the proponents of the liberal-egalitarian approach consider the unconditionality of treatment as essential to access a society of justice. Widerquist, Vanderborght, Noguera and De Wispelaere (2013, p. 12) argue that "most people who favour Basic Income do so because they believe that everyone should have unconditional access to the resources required to meet their basic needs" (BASIC NEEDS). Despite the lack of consensus in the literature, several scholars also consider that the BI is justi-

fied by the natural right (NATURAL RIGHT) of everyone to equally (EQUALITY/EQUITY) have the common resources at their disposal (Baker, 1992; Barry, 1996a; Liebig & Mau, 2002; Van Parijs, 1991). In addition, the current Welfare State is often described by the BI proponents as increasingly inefficient to provide an acceptable security to all (SITUATION –). This is particularly the case concerning underprivileged groups who are dependent on the profits and – or – are facing the risk of the unemployment traps (SOCIAL –; Van Parijs, 2006). These groups are viewed as the first victims of the Welfare State's failures and therefore the first beneficiaries of the implementation of BI (UNDERPRIVILEGED PEOPLE). Finally, the BI can also be seen as a solution to the ills of society and the "current economic crisis" (ECONOMIC CRISIS) (van der Veen, 1998).

Regarding the *pragmatic considerations*, the BI unconditional character is seen by its advocates as a *sine qua non*-condition to reach a real freedom for everyone. Nonetheless, this controversial argument frames the debate around two complementary questions: which group of people is targeted (CONDITIONS) and what are the access requirements to the BI (DISCRIMINATIONS)? The combination of both questions defines the level of inclusiveness ensured by the BI (ACCESS; Van Parijs, 2006). The advocates of an advanced form of BI support its transfer to the widest political community possible. In this view, the only condition restricting access to the BI is the need to be recognized as a member of the targeted political community (MEMBERSHIP CONDITION; Vanderborght, 2004). Yet, the question of the membership in itself yields tensions between the proponents of an income reserved to national citizens – in its legal sense (CITIZENSHIP CONDITION; Vanderborght & Van Parijs, 2005) – and the proponents of an income only transferred to the residents of a defined territorial area (RESIDENTIAL CONDITION). However, the political community is generally associated with the Nation-States' scale (SCALE; NATIONAL LEVEL) even if other models wish to apply it to other levels (Van Parijs, 2006; Vanderborght, 2004; Vanderborght et al., 2005). The consequence is that there is no purely UNCONDITIONAL model of the BI unless it is intended to be applied to the whole world.

With regard to the freedom argument, four potential normative considerations and nine pragmatic considerations are identified. Focusing on *the normative dimension*, one of the most controversial aspects of the BI is its relationship with the reciprocity principle (Vanderborght, 2004). By causing the decoupling of wages and work (Standing, 2002), the BI hits a central norm of our societies based on the work value and the contribution to the common good (van der Veen, 1998). It could encourage some demotivation to work and increase laziness in the society. The apparition of FREE RIDERS caused by the BI implementation (CONSEQUENCES –) is best explained by Van Parijs (1991) in his answer to Rawls' objections towards the moral foundations of the BI. In line with our reasoning – the freedom condition is considered as inducing a redirection of the debate towards the consequences of a BI implementation – the same diagnostic of the failed Welfare State can also be taken as a starting point for the BI legitimization process. Yet, the frequency of criticism of the current system is expected to be lower in the freedom groups (SITUATION –). Besides, the issue of BI funding (FUNDING) is one of the biggest challenges faced by its advocates and is a key question in the academic debate (see Ackerman, Alstott, & Van Parijs, 2006; Vanderborght et al., 2005).

Regarding *the pragmatic considerations*, it is expected that respondents would be oriented towards a discussion about the outputs of a potential BI implementation (CONSEQUENCES). In a public policy legitimation process, it is natural to see decision-makers stressing many positive consequences induced by a reform (CONSEQUENCES +; De Wispelaere et al., 2012). However, it is inevitable to also testify emerging protests about potential negative consequences (CONSEQUENCES –). Going back to our theoretical framework's literature, we detect a two-step causal logic that separates the moment of the BI implementation and the reaching of its final goal. The maximisation of real freedom (LIBERTY +) is conditioned by the meeting of individuals' basic needs (BASIC NEEDS; Barry, 1996a; Van Parijs, 1998). Yet, this requirement also allows for an increase in the societal cohesion and in the quality of life (QUALITY +).

4 Findings

When the BI is framed as unconditional

The first hypothesis led us to expect respondents to advance arguments linked to the conditions of BI implementation to a greater extent. Regarding the *normative considerations*, both arguments referring to the ideal of a more egalitarian society (EQUALITY/EQUITY) and the natural right to receive the BI (NATURAL RIGHT) are not used by the respondents to justify the implementation of the BI despite the fact that these two arguments are highly discussed in the literature in relation to the unconditionality of BI.

In the same vein, the analysis reveals that the unconditionality argument's condition deviates respondents' argumentation from the BASIC NEEDS argument, as only 17.3 % of them refer to this argument against 28.1 % in the neutral group. Instead of emphasising this aspect of the debate, the results show that respondents experiencing the unconditionality treatment focus much more on other arguments linked to the current socio-economic

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7

situation than the respondents from the neutral condition. The general discursive strategy that consists in denouncing a current socio-economic crisis to legitimise the BI is thus successful. First, it appeared that the question of the Welfare State's failure to ensure social justice for everyone (SOCIAL –) is indeed more likely to be advanced when respondents receive some prior information. This trend is illustrated by an increased usage of the SITUATION – and ECONOMIC CRISIS arguments in all informed groups (see Box 2 for an illustration). The fact that references to these three arguments are more present when the respondents receive an informative text suggests that the participants integrated these arguments in their opinion formation process.

Box 2:
Example of the use of SITUATION –, ECONOMIC CRISIS and SOCIAL – arguments by a respondent from the unconditionality treatment (own emphasis and own translation from French).
"[…] *this solution is increasingly being considered* **to get out of the economic crisis** *where* **unemployment** *and* **precariousness** *are important*. [...]"

Second, the trend towards a discursive strategy denouncing a current socio-economic crisis is reinforced when the political discourse stresses the unconditional character of BI (see Table 3). Our findings demonstrate the expected framing effect of the unconditionality condition concerning both SOCIAL – and ECONOMIC CRISIS arguments. The framing effect on the SOCIAL – argument is even more striking when we only consider respondents pointing out a poor societal situation (SITUATION –). As an illustration, when 61.9 % of the unconditionality condition's respondents refer to a bad current social situation, this is only the case for 30 % of the respondents in the neutral and freedom conditions.

Table 3: Frequency of relevant codes reg. normative considerations in answers from the respondents of the neutral, unconditionality and freedom conditions (H1a).

H1a		Neutral condition	Unconditionality condition	Freedom condition
Normative considerations	situation–	14.6 %	**25.9 %***	22.7 %
	social –	4.5 %	**16 %***	6.8 %
	economic crisis	5.6 %	**13.6%****	12.5%*
	underprivileged people	6.7 %	**16%***	11.4 %

***p < 0.05 **p < 0.10 *p < 0.15

Third, we expected the argument stating that disadvantaged – or poor – people are the explicit beneficiaries of the BI to be more present in the participants' texts due to the framing effect of the unconditionality condition. Both unconditionality treatments' groups refer more frequently to the UNDERPRIVILEGED PEOPLE argument than the neutral condition, but only the unconditionality group's effect is statistically different (see Table 3).

Now looking at the *pragmatic considerations*, we expected the respondents to use arguments assessing the level of inclusiveness of the BI by articulating both the unconditional and the universal nature of the BI. In this regard, the occurrences of the arguments related to the ACCESS issue are similar between the neutral and unconditionality conditions. Accordingly, these data tend to nuance our expectations.

By contrast, the CONDITIONS dimensions present dissimilar patterns depending on the experimental treatment. Interestingly, the unconditionality condition frames the opinion formation process on both the CITIZENSHIP CONDITION and the MEMBERSHIP CONDITION to a greater extent for the participants from this group compared to the neutral condition (see Table 4). This trend goes hand in hand with a significantly lower number of members of this group who describe the BI as purely unconditional (UNCONDITIONAL). It confirms that they are more bound to the conditional aspect of the BI debate (see Table 4). Finally, the findings concerning the geographical scale do not confirm our hypothesis. Yet, it is worth noticing that the geographical area that is most commonly linked to the potential BI implementation is the national scale. Therefore, the relation between SCALE and NATIONAL LEVEL is strong but no framing impact of our conditions can be detected since the freedom and unconditionality groups refer to a similar extent to this argument.

Table 4: Frequency of relevant codes reg. pragmatic considerations in the answers from the respondents of the neutral, unconditionality and freedom conditions (H1a).

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H1a		Neutral condition	Unconditionality condition	Freedom condition
Pragmatic considerations	UNCONDITIONAL	38.2 %	**19.8%*****	25%**
	CONDITIONS	53.9 %	**74.1%*****	53.4%
	CITIZENSHIP CONDITION	37.1 %	**49.4%****	37.5%
	RESIDENTIAL CONDITION	7.9 %	**9.9%***	4.5 %
	MEMBERSHIP CONDITION	10.1 %	**21%*****	10.2 %

*****p < 0.05 **p < 0.10 *p < 0.15*

To summarise, when the respondents exposed to the unconditionality condition form their opinion, it is clear that the conditional dimension of the BI is the most significant one. Even if a great part of the respondents' answers integrates arguments describing the BI as essentially universal, the experimental treatment enhances considerations about the required characteristics needed to receive the BI. While respondents from the unconditionality condition mostly refer to a BI that would only be distributed to the citizens, respondents from both the neutral and freedom conditions develop arguments linked to this dimension in a weaker way. We can therefore point to a difference in the type of text produced by the respondents that can be attributed to the treatment they have been exposed to. This indicates a framing effect of the unconditionality argument.

When the BI is framed as providing freedom

The *normative considerations* expected to be activated by the freedom experimental condition are mainly linked to the reciprocity principle funding that underpins the current social model (CONSEQUENCES – and FREE RIDERS; see Box 3 for an illustration). What emerges from the data is that 80 % of the respondents from the treatment conditions referring to the negative consequences of the BI indicate that its implementation is likely to increase the risk of passive behaviour in society. The most remarkable observation is that this issue of *free riders* is integrated into the debate without being attached to a particular political discourse. More than 20 % of respondents from all treatment conditions mention this negative consequence of the BI implementation. Therefore, no specific conclusion can be drawn regarding the potential framing impact of the freedom experimental treatment.

Box 3:
Example of the use of FREE-RIDERS argument by a respondent from the freedom treatment (own emphasis and own translation from French).
"[…]. *Work is an integral part of our society and it is the basis of its smooth running but also of numerous quarrels. The big question is to know if receiving this basic income will not encourage people **to work less**, so **contenting themselves with the benefits**.*"

Results on the way respondents argue about the challenge of BI FUNDING follow the same trend as those on the reciprocity issue. None of our results lead us to the conclusion that one experimental condition would particularly frame the debate on this important aspect of BI proposals. Nonetheless, our prediction concerning the construction of argumentative texts after the freedom treatment turns out to be supported by the data. Because of the *veil of vagueness* hiding operational considerations in the public debate, we expected that respondents would not go over the financial dimensions in their reasoning. It is thus not striking to see that less than 6% of them referred to one financing strategy to fund a BI.

While results based on *normative considerations* did not yield statistically significant tendencies, the *pragmatic considerations* tend to support our hypotheses. As expected, the respondents from the freedom condition advance arguments related to the (positive) consequences of BI more frequently (see Table 5). Yet, the use of such an argument also leads the respondents to think about the negative outcomes of the BI. Besides, two additional arguments expected to be activated by the freedom condition confirm our hypothesis. The respondents from the freedom group clearly put the QUALITY + (44.3 %) and the BASIC NEEDS (38.6 %) arguments at the centre of their pragmatic considerations (see Table 5), more than the respondents from the other conditions. These results point to the framing impact of the experimental argument linked to the notion of freedom.

Table 5: Frequency of the relevant codes reg. the pragmatic considerations in the answers from the respondents from the neutral, unconditionality and freedom conditions (H1b).

H1b		Neutral condition	Unconditionality condition	Freedom condition
Pragmatic considerations	consequences	74.2 %	71.6%	**85.2%***
	consequences +	67.4 %	61.7%	**78.4 % ***
	quality +	38.2%	38.3%	**44.3%**
	basic needs	28.1 %	17.3%***	**38.6%***

***p < 0.05 **p < 0.10 *p < 0.15

To sum up, the usage of discursive arguments stressing the potential freedom provided by the BI appears to be the best strategy to legitimate the public policy. In particular, the positive consequences like the improvement of the quality of life and the meeting of people's basic needs occupy a central place in the opinion formation processes of the individuals exposed to the freedom condition. Yet, the argument of De Wispelaere et al. (2012) on the existence of a *first-mover cost* turns out to be confirmed as well since the freedom condition also frames the respondents' considerations towards the negative consequences of BI implementation. In other words, taking a clear position on the BI by framing the debate on the freedom the BI would provide could be counterproductive for decision-makers who would thus indirectly push the public opinion to consider the negative consequences of this public policy in a more pronounced manner. This emphasises the ambiguity of the framing effect that can be multifaceted and so doing, difficult to anticipate when one aims at influencing a debate.

The influence of metaphors

The second focus of our contribution relates to the specific impact of metaphors. We expected metaphors to reinforce the framing impact of our argumentative conditions, i. e. to find more arguments in the metaphorical conditions than in the non-metaphorical conditions pointing to the same argument (unconditionality or freedom). The findings appears to be more nuanced and some results are even counter-intuitive. Both metaphors on the pocket money (reinforcing the unconditionality experimental treatment) and the springboard (reinforcing the freedom experimental treatment) do not support our hypothesis, by producing counterproductive effects. The base frame metaphor (reinforcing the freedom experimental treatment) offers nuanced results since references to both positive and negative consequences turn out be strengthened by its presence.

Concerning the ***pocket money metaphor,*** the results challenge our second hypothesis for *normative considerations*. On the one hand, the pocket money metaphor does not produce any effect since it activates the respondents' considerations about a negative situation (SITUATION –) and about the UNDERPRIVILEGED PEOPLE as the first beneficiaries of the BI implementation to the same extent as within the unconditionality argument's condition. Similar answers are found when the respondents have been exposed to an argument with a metaphor and when they only read the argument without the metaphor. This confirms H1a but does not provide empirical evidence for a specific impact of the metaphor as expected in H2. On the other hand, the pocket money metaphor also produces a counterproductive effect by diverting the respondents' attention from the rhetoric of the Welfare State's social and economic failure to the impossibility of financing the BI (ECONOMIC –). Indeed, this metaphor does not generate the number of arguments expected under the unconditionality treatment, despite the fact that this argument is still present in the informative text, next to the reference to the BI as pocket money (see Table 6).

Table 6: Frequency of the relevant codes in the answers from the respondents of the neutral, unconditionality and pocket money metaphor conditions (H2).

H2		Neutral condition	Unconditionality condition	Pocket money metaphor condition
Normative considerations	economic crisis	5.6 %	**13.6%**	7.6 %
	social **−**	4.5%	**16%***	7.6 %
	economic **−**	5.6%***	0%*	**11.4%***
Pragmatic considerations	discrimination	9%	7.4 %	**19%***
	citizenship condition	37.1 %	49.4%**	**53.2%***
	scale	47.2 % ***	66.7 %**	**74.7%***
	national level	47.2%**	63 %	**74.7%***

citizenship condition X national level[9]	60 %	82 %	**92%***

***p < 0.05 **p < 0.10 *p < 0.15

As far as the *pragmatic considerations* are concerned, our data show that, even if the metaphor draws the attention on the inclusiveness of the BI in general, the pocket money condition, compared to the unconditionality argument's condition, seems to trigger a more precise idea of who should be concerned by the BI. This could be explained by the fact that pocket money is naturally linked to the conceptual domain of the family, which is by definition a closed-ended and well-identified community with rigid access criteria. As shown by our results, the lower number of references to UNIVERSAL arguments is accompanied by a significantly higher number of references to the discriminatory (DISCRIMINATION) and conditional arguments mostly allocating the BI to the Belgian population, as exemplified in Box 4. The pocket money metaphor produces an effect by stimulating this family idea in the participants' minds, who refer to the Belgian State as the household for the BI. This is shown by a significantly higher level of respondents in the pocket money group who explicitly relate the use of the CITIZENSHIP CONDITION to the NATIONAL geographic LEVEL than is the case in both the neutral and unconditionality groups.

Box 4:
Example of the use of the CITIZENSHIP CONDITION, RESIDENTIAL CONDITION and NATIONAL LEVEL SCALE arguments by a respondent from the pocket money condition (own emphasis and own translation from French).
"[…]. *This income would be the same for all individuals in the **defined geographical area** (It would be **Belgium** in this precise case). In this way, all the people having **the Belgian nationality** and **living on its territory would be entitled to receive this income**.* […]"

Finally, we also expected the pocket money condition to trigger a negative framing given the nature of the metaphor in itself, that clearly refers to the family and, hence a risk for paternalism towards the recipients of the BI. Our open question on how respondents would define and assess the BI gives us the opportunity to directly evaluate to what extent the pocket money metaphor generates a negative view of the state treating citizens as children. It is indeed the case since the respondents from this group indicate to be against the BI to a statistically significant larger extent than the respondents from the other conditions (about 20 % of respondents in comparison to 6.7 % among the neutral group). This thus suggests a framing impact of the pocket money metaphor on our respondents.

Results from the ***springboard metaphor*** condition lead us to partially reject the second hypothesis. Respondents tend to consider a set of potential negative consequences produced by the BI reform to a greater extent after having been exposed to the metaphor. The springboard metaphor might thus stress the negative consequences much more than the freedom argument alone (see Table 7). Nonetheless, the results also tend to support the framing impact of the freedom argument on its own since the respondents from the metaphorical condition refer to the positive consequences of the BI to the same extent as the respondents from the freedom argument's condition (almost eight out of ten respondents do so in these groups, against slightly more than half the respondents in the control group).

Table 7: Frequency of the relevant codes in the answers from the respondents of the neutral, freedom and springboard metaphor conditions (H2).

H2		Neutral condition	Freedom condition	Springboard metaphor condition
Normative considerations	consequences −	31.5 %	36.4 %	**44.2%***
	free riders	24.7 %	29.5 %	**34.9%***
	funding	21.3 %	30.7%**	**32.6%***
Pragmatic considerations	citizenship condition X national level	60 %	75 %	**90%**

***p < 0.05 **p < 0.10 *p < 0.15

Some specificities of the springboard metaphor turn out to nuance hypothesis 1b. On the one hand, as expected, the arguments related to the FUNDING, the NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES of the BI and the FREE RIDERS, taken separately, are higher for both the freedom and springboard conditions (see Table 7). On the other hand, the

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11

metaphorical group goes in the opposite direction by also enhancing *pragmatic considerations* towards arguments expected in the hypothesis 1a. The springboard group (freedom argument) indeed follows a similar logic as the pocket money group (unconditionality argument) for the identification of individuals potentially concerned by BI implementation (see Table 7). This means that, by using this metaphor, discourse producers can trigger arguments theoretically related to the *unconditionality* approach of the BI. Yet, they are also likely to lead individuals to consider this public policy more negatively or – at least – to consider both positive and negative consequences of the BI considering that the freedom condition only stimulates positive consequences to a statistically significant greater extent than the control group.

The third metaphorical informative text included the ***base frame metaphor***, added on top of the freedom argument. The metaphorical condition confirms the framing impact of our freedom experimental condition concerning the *pragmatic considerations* about the BI consequences. Indeed, both positive and negative consequences' codes are activated to the same extent in the metaphorical group and in the freedom argument's group. These results call for further investigation of other potential effects as consequences of BI.

More precisely, the base frame metaphorical condition leads the respondents to consider other positive consequences of the BI than the freedom argument alone. The respondents having read the base frame text tend to consider the BI as providing more OPPORTUNITIES and LIBERTY +, two arguments expected to be found in the freedom-focused group's argumentations. This framing effect is specific to the base frame metaphor with 30 % and 21.3 % of the respondents referring to these codes, against much lower rates for both the freedom and the springboard conditions (see Table 8). Yet, the base frame condition also seems to deviate the respondents' attention from the arguments of BASIC NEEDS and QUALITY +, that are also part of the positive consequences expected to be raised according to hypothesis 1b (see Table 8). This situation can be explained by the fact that a base frame is *de facto* defined as meeting the individuals' basic needs and improving their quality of life. This could clarify why the respondents exposed to this metaphor described the BI in terms of direct output (more opportunities, more liberty) rather than what is inherent to the concept of the base frame. The metaphorical condition's results thus nuance our expectations in that it does not enhance the occurrences of some arguments stimulated by the non-metaphorical condition but it instead deviates the focus of the respondents' answers to different sub-arguments within the same expected category. The framing impact of the metaphor could thus be to specify which aspects of the consequences of the BI were prompted in the respondents' minds.

Table 8: Frequency of the relevant codes in the answers from the respondents of the neutral, freedom and base frame metaphor conditions (H2).

H2		Neutral condition	Freedom condition	Base frame metaphor condition
Pragmatic considerations	opportunities	6.7%	10.2%	**30%***
	liberty +	10.1 %	18.2%**	**21.3%***
	quality +	38.2%	**44.3%***	33.8 %
	basic needs	28.1%	**38.6%***	27.5 %

***p < 0.05 **p < 0.10 *p < 0.15

We also uncovered this deviating effect in other settings. First, being exposed to the base frame metaphor reduces the attention to the question of the regularity of payment of the BI. The metaphor considerably deviates the considerations of the group's respondents both from the argument of TEMPORALITY and the possibility to see it paid on a monthly basis. This phenomenon can be explained in comparison with the pocket money condition's results. The base frame is probably understood by respondents as being a rigid device slipped under the individuals' feet, whereas allocating someone pocket money is seen as a regular transfer of money.

Discussion

The objective of the article was to contribute to the debate on the psychological feasibility of the basic income while testing for the impact of discursive strategies (i. e. specific arguments and metaphors) on the opinion formation processes of individuals. More precisely, our study was based on the idea that for a radical reform policy to be implemented, it has to be supported by the citizens. Indeed, people's minds have to be ready to accept and support a new policy. In other words, policy-makers should first aim at influencing how citizens form their opinions before being able to change it. The BI has to be seen as psychological feasible before any

political action to be considered (De Wispelaere et al., 2012). The article supported the idea that the very usage of words is extremely relevant in this respect. The experimental setting of the study, starting from a real newspaper article that has slightly been modified to meet several experimental treatments, allowed us to test the impact of specific arguments and metaphors on how French-speaking Belgian citizens form their opinion on the BI debate.

We first analyse the impact of arguments on the opinion formation processes of citizens. The results of our experiment show significant differences among the respondents, which are related to the various stimuli induced in the experiment. Based on the arguments presented in the literature on the BI, we expected respondents to raise different issues when asked to write their opinion on the BI, depending on which argument they had been exposed to in the input text. Our findings suggest that an informative text can frame people's opinion formation processes. One indeed tends to copy the arguments s/he has just read, or at least to be inspired by them to form his/her own opinion, even with a few words' difference only. There is thus a framing effect of an informative text on an argumentative text, and this regardless of which argument was presented, the unconditional character of the BI or the freedom it can offer.

Our findings demonstrate that, in comparison with the participants from the neutral and control conditions, the participants from the "unconditionality" condition tend to refer to arguments related to *the conditions* of the BI implementation much more frequently. They specify much more who should be entitled to receive the BI, a clear reference to its access conditions. Interestingly, these participants also stress the negative political considerations justifying the need for a BI to a higher extent. In this regard, the main difference with the other experimental treatments is that participants from the "unconditionality" condition focus their argumentation more on the *failure of the Welfare State*. The second argument tested in our experiment relates to freedom, and these participants were expected and indeed tend to more often report on *the consequences* of the implementation of the BI than the participants from the control groups. In particular, they raised much more the positive consequences of the BI, such as the quality of life and the fulfilment of one's basic need. Nonetheless, contrary to what could be expected from the academic debate on the BI, the freedom condition did not frame the opinion formation process of the participants on the reciprocity principle, the political considerations about the current socio-economic context and the challenge of BI funding. To summarise, despite the fact that in some cases the impact of arguments did not go in the expected direction, our experiment clearly emphasised that an informative text can influence the citizens when they form their opinion since clear statistically significantly different patterns were uncovered between the treatment and control groups.

Secondly, the experiment also allowed us to analyse the specific impact of metaphors. Metaphors were expected to reinforce the framing impact of the argumentative conditions by stimulating a greater proportion of the participants to raise the issues expected from the argument alone. The findings are nuanced and some results are even counter-intuitive: while the "pocket money metaphor" and the "base frame" metaphors stimulated, to some extent, the occurrence of arguments, this was not the case of the springboard metaphor. Interestingly, the participants from the *pocket money metaphor* condition (unconditionality argument) raised more concerns about the impossibility to finance the BI and argued much more that the BI should concern the Belgian citizens. By doing so, they make a clear reference to the money issue and also transpose the family metaphor to the Belgian State–which was not a pattern uncovered by the unconditionality argument alone. To put it another way, the *pocket money metaphor specifies* the framing already induced by the related argument. Moreover, the pocket money also seems to push the participants to stand against the BI, what could be linked to the paternalistic behaviour of the State suggested by the conceptual domain of the family. *The springboard metaphor*, on the contrary, lead to contrasted results. The arguments linked to freedom were raised to a lesser extent by the participants from this condition than the participants from the freedom group. The fact that participants learned about a springboard effect deviated their attention from the freedom idea and led them to consider the BI more negatively focusing on its outputs. In other words, *the springboard metaphor* has a *counterproductive effect* by leading the individuals to consider both negative and positive consequences of the BI to a greater extent, while the freedom condition stimulates the consideration of its positive consequences only. This was not the case for the other freedom-related metaphor (i. e. *the base frame)*. The participants from this group tended to report much more on the opportunities offered by the BI and on the freedom issues than both the freedom and springboard groups. In other terms, this metaphor *strengthens* the framing impact of the related argument by stressing some new potential positive consequences of BI implementation. Despite these mixed results, the experiment clearly highlighted that a difference exists between texts with and without metaphors. These results are thus in line with Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011, 2013, and 2015), but also Reuchamps, Dodeigne, and Perrez (2018), who have already confirmed the influential role of metaphors.

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Conclusion

Is the BI psychologically feasible? While this article does not succeed in providing a comprehensive answer to this important question, it proposes an empirical analysis of the opinion formation of citizens on the BI debate. This article demonstrates that when a debate is controversial and ambiguous, such as the debate on the BI, one should pay particular attention to which arguments are put forward in the public debate, as this could profoundly modify the psychological desirability of such a policy. In particular, the use of metaphors that have the potential to frame the debate can be critical. In this article, we focused on three metaphors, but many more are employed in the public debate to make the BI more understandable for everyone.

More research still needs to be done to empirically assess in which directions metaphors – as a discursive strategy – can influence how citizens apprehend the BI. Indeed, as rightly underlined by Reuchamps et al. (2018), but also by Thibodeau and Durgin (2011), other factors can also influence the framing effect of metaphors, such as the prior political knowledge of the participants, or the degree of extendedness of a particular metaphorical mapping but also, the exposure through time to a given metaphor. More specifically, in order to assess the impact of these three metaphors on Belgian citizens, the experiment could also be repeated on a representative sample of the population, rather than just a homogeneous sample of first-year bachelor students on which we aimed at testing the mechanism at hand rather than generalising a behaviour. Yet, this article already constituted an interesting step forward in the analysis of discursive strategies on the opinion formation processes of citizens, as well as empirically contributing to the study of the psychological feasibility of the BI in Belgium.

Above all, political discourse and how it is framed matter. If it appears that a simple informative text containing specific arguments – or pictorial representations of complex and abstract concepts – can influence the reasoning of the citizens who are confronted with it, political discourse's content is therefore of particular strategic importance as it is a key factor in the advent of public policies. Nonetheless, although the use of such linguistic tools might be successful, it also appears that it may be counterproductive if it is poorly mastered.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 As highlighted by Vanderborght et al. (2005), the label used to designate this idea is likely to influence its political feasibility since other appellations such as "demogrant", "social dividend", "universal income" or "citizen's income" are recovering different realities. However, "Basic Income" remains the most commonly used label in the international debate.
2 Discussions on BI have not been translated so far into concrete policy proposals in Belgium, even though *Vivant*, a niche party primarily dedicated to the promotion of BI, participated to the regional, federal and European elections in 1999 and obtained one seat in the Brussels Capital Region Council, before entering a cartel and then merging with the Flemish liberal party Open VLD. The party is still represented on its own in the German-speaking Community Parliament, and got elected two deputies at the 2014 elections (Baudewyns, Dandoy, & Reuchamps, 2015). As noted by Vanderborght (2002), the ephemeral emergence of this party at the Belgian level has only allowed the idea to be disseminated more widely in the public debate by leaving the academic circles in which it had until then been confined.
3 Besides these three approaches which satisfactorily cover most of the arguments in favour of BI, other normative justifications could be found in the literature. For a full account of the different areas of the BI debate, see Widerquist et al. (2013).
4 Every normative approach described by Vanderborght (2004) is of course facing opposition from advocates of other obediences or outright BI opponents.
5 See the section on method and coding scheme for a detailed justification of the selection of arguments.
6 Two main critiques were formulated by the authors: the absence of a control version of the stimulus text, in which the idea of crime would have been presented in a neutral fashion, and the fact that the initial metaphorical frame (beast vs. virus) was supported by other metaphorical words in the rest of the text, that might have reinforced the initial frame. In our experiment, we took these critiques into account.

7 The respondents were randomly allocated to one experimental condition, each condition gathering approximately a hundred participants. We tested for the homogeneity of these groups on socio-demographic characteristics and on political opinions and no statistically significant difference arose.

8 First, two authors of the paper coded the answers based on the codebook. Second, the coding was debated with the entire research team to ensure the highest level of consistency of the coding. An excerpt of our codebook is available in the Appendix, detailing the codes that were the most relevant to guide our analysis. The entire codebook is available upon request.

9 This line refers to the number of the respondents who referred both to the citizenship condition and to the national level. Hereby, we want to emphasise the fact that the citizenship considered in the argumentation is the national citizenship and not another one (e. g. the local or supranational ones).

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