

The basic income debate in Belgium - An experimental study on the framing impact of metaphors on the opinion formation process

Thomas Legein (UCLouvain)

Audrey Vandeleene (Lund University)

Pauline Heyvaert (ULiège & UCLouvain)

Julien Perrez (ULiège)

Min Reuchamps (UCLouvain)

Very first draft

Paper prepared for the conference

Belgium: The State of the Federation

Brussels

December 2017

Introduction

This paper focuses on a timely political issue by addressing the debate of the opportunity to implement a basic income system in a given polity. Basic income (BI) can be defined as “an income paid by a political community to all its members, on an individual basis, without means-test or compensation requirement” (Vanderborght and Van Parijs, 2005). This is an ongoing debate in Belgium, both in academia and in the public sphere. However, this debate has not yet entered the legislative process as such. This is still much more a societal issue that has not been translated into concrete policy proposals. We take advantage of this preliminary stage of the BI debate to study the influence of discursive strategies on the opinion formation process of individuals. For doing so, we ran an experiment in which some participants were stimulated with some arguments that could be used in the BI debate while others did receive either a neutral text or no text at all. We even added three groups who received a text containing one argument and a metaphor underlying this argument. Metaphors are indeed said to impact political preferences in a much more powerful way than arguments alone. The goal of our experiment is to assess the influence of arguments and metaphors on the opinion formation process. We asked participants to take position in the debate about the controversial issue of BI and analysed their written outputs to uncover whether their content was influenced by the text they read right before.

This article draws on the theoretical framework conceptualized by De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012) which questions in a systematic manner the political feasibility of BI. They provide a typology designed around two major dimensions of the policy process, i.e. the political *agencies* and *constraints* (See table 1). This combination results in the distinction between four types of political feasibility: *strategic*, *institutional*, *psychological* and *behavioural*. To stick with the authors’ assumption, BI is viewed as politically feasible when there is a reasonable probability to see the policy being implemented in a short-term future when these background conditions are favourable. On the one hand, *strategic* and *psychological* feasibilities focus on the achievability of public policies. The difference lies in the kind of political agents addressed by these public policies. While the *strategic* feasibility concerns identified actors having clearly differentiated roles, interests and capacities, the *psychological* feasibility points to less shaped actors who react following a “mass” behavioural logic. The perfect example of such a *diffuse agency* is the general public. On the other hand, *institutional* and *behavioural* feasibilities relate to the viability of public policies. The former questions the pre-existing set of institutions that may impact the potential performance of a newly implemented policy while the latter is looking at the policy effect on individuals’ behaviour after its implementation.

Table 1 : Typology of Political Feasibility (based on De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012)

	Prospective constraints (“achievability”)	Retrospective constraints (“viability”)
Discrete agency	<i>Strategic feasibility</i>	<i>Institutional feasibility</i>
Diffuse agency	<i>Psychological feasibility</i>	<i>Behavioural feasibility</i>

Among these conditions, the *strategic* dimension will be partially addressed in our discussion of the ambiguous nature of BI. However, our reasoning is mainly focused on the *psychological feasibility*. Following De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012), the *psychological* dimension corresponds to the necessity for political actors and decision-makers to legitimate controversial public policies such as BI in order to secure a broad level of support among the general public. The aim is to convince the public opinion “that BI is a normatively attractive and practically effective policy” (De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012). This dimension is crucial as it concerns a core feature of our liberal democracies. The challenge at stake is to ensure a robust enough support among the population by undermining the emergence of a strong and hostile opposition. This challenge would be very seriously taken into account by political agents because of the power of action that voters have in case of dissatisfaction.

This twofold observation allows us to emphasize the importance of influential tools and strategies available to decision-makers. As De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012) highlighted, how the BI proposal is framed may significantly increase its *psychological feasibility*. Carefully choosing our arguments can help avoid triggering negative perceptions, hostile emotions and ensure positive attitudes toward the policy at stake. Van Parijs and Vandenborgh (2005) go in the same direction. Wisely labelling this concept is likely to impact its political feasibility. The main goal of this paper is to question the legitimation process of BI through a discursive approach (Perkiö, 2002; Liebig and Mau, 2012) since it has been proven that argumentative political discourses can have direct impact on the opinion forming process of individuals.

The paper is organised as follows. We first establish our theoretical framework, which relies on the ambiguous nature of the basic income that renders this policy reform especially relevant to study our research question, i.e. how a discourse can influence the opinion formation process of the receivers. We focus in particular on metaphors as a type of language element that could be influential. The next section specifies our RQ and hypotheses. The paper’s experimental design, as well as the method of data analysis are then presented. We finally answer to our research question in three phases, each one relying on one hypothesis, before discussing our main findings.

Theoretical framework

The ambiguous political/philosophical nature of the basic income

As raised by De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012), BI is a complex concept and its advocates are facing many challenges when it comes to set it to the agenda. Given its ambiguous nature, BI remains a multiform idea poorly known by the general public. Studying this abstract political issue allows us to assess the way political opinions are built in a controversial and not emotionally connoted debate. It is expected that individuals are likely to be influenced by the use of specific political discourses concerning a concept that combines many political aspects that often contradict each other. We explain in this section why BI is a controversial

idea and why this public policy helps us understand how influential strategies can be used by political actors in order to improve its achievability.

Since a few decades, the interest for BI has boomed in several places and from political actors originated from the entire political spectrum. Nowadays, it seems impossible to speak about the Welfare State's future without bringing up the BI issue (Van Parijs & Vandenberght, 2005). The question of its legitimacy is actively addressed by scholars – both political scientist and philosophers – but also within the public sphere (Tobin, 1965; Belorgey, 2000; Maniquet & Neumann, 2016).

Vandenberght (2004) summarizes the main normative arguments in favour of BI in three distinctive families. The first one 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 in order to be able to survive (Meade, 1989; Steiner, 1992). This type of arguments relates to the works of forerunners like Thomas Paine (1796) or Charles Fourier (Cunliffe & Erreygers, 2001) who have planted the philosophical roots justifying a primordial characteristic of BI: the unconditionality of treatment. As emphasized by Vandenberght (2004), some proponents of the third family rely quiet largely on these theoretical roots to justify the unconditional character of their own BI case. The second family adopts a Marxist approach. This justification is illustrated by the article of Van Parijs and van den Veer "*A Capitalist road to Communism*" (1986). Following a succinct definition of Marxism given by Marx himself, they consider BI as a tool which allows maximising the resources shared "to each according to his needs" (Van Parijs & Van den Veer, 1986). They describe BI as a mean to access a Marxist society without having to pass through the socialist stage. However, Van Parijs (1998) later changed his line of argumentation by developing a strong argumentation serving as a theoretical ground for the third family. This third family is probably the most prolific one regarding the intensity and the richness of the debate produced around BI. The liberal-egalitarian justification of BI finds its roots in the Rawlsian conception of justice (Rawls, 2009). Derived from this philosophical core, the seminal book *Real Freedom for All: What (if anything) can justify capitalism?* (Van Parijs, 1998) remains until now the most developed argumentation for BI implementation. Its proponents aim to introduce a BI to its highest sustainable level in order to maximize the *real freedom* of individuals without giving the State a prominent role (Van Parijs, 1998; Vandenberght, 2004; Blais, 1999).

Of course, the normative debate about BI is not confined to these three approaches. More feminist (Fitzpatrick, 1999; Parker, 1991) or post-productivist (Fitzpatrick, 2009) approaches can be seen as different ways to justify the distribution of BI. However, we have chosen to adopt the liberal-egalitarian approach during our experiment because it probably represents the most commonly used approach both in the literature and the Belgian French-speaking public sphere. Obviously, every argumentative family described by Vandenberght (2004) is facing opposition from advocates of other obedience or outright BI opponents. This observation allows us to highlight the counter-productive effect of BI's ambiguous nature on its political feasibility (De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012; Barry, 1996a).

The policy interest for BI has increased significantly since the 1970s (Vandenborgh, 2004). The demand for – and the number of – experimentations logically raised concerns about the shape BI could adopt in order to reform the current form of Welfare State. Yet, the concept is transcended by vivid tensions caused by the diversity of opinions concerning the aims this apparatus should strive for.

The inherent ambiguity of the concept is both strength and weakness when it comes to addressing its political feasibility even though the idea is still evolving in the public sphere (Barry B., 1996a; Perkiö, 2012). While it provokes substantial disagreement concerning normative principles underlying the concept amongst its advocates, it also gathers support amongst the political cleavages (De Wispelaere & Stirton, 2004). Barry's observation (1996a) can directly be linked to the challenge of BI *strategic feasibility* defined by De Wispelaere and Noguera (2012). This latter is the necessity for BI's advocates to build a strong coalition to set the policy to the agenda. Following their assumption, it seems that the principal challenge faced by BI's advocates is that the project is generally supported by weak and marginalized groups. Therefore, one of the strategies adopted by these actors consists in hiding the operational considerations about BI under a *veil of vagueness* in order to reach agreement at a higher level of generality. De Wispelaere (2015a) sums up this strategy by arguing that defining and speaking about BI in a very abstract way allows to avoid a debate on polarizing issues.

Yet, taking a clear position towards BI is not necessarily a winning decision (De Wispelaere & Stirton, 2013). Two points are at stake here. Firstly, the defence of a specific BI model holds two consequences. On the one hand, it allows to gather support amongst targeted social groups but, in doing so, it also encourages a strong opposition from other groups who feel disadvantaged (De Wispelaere J. , 2015b). On the other hand, it allows political actors to distinguish themselves from their opponents, but it can also imply a *first-mover cost* (De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012). Being the first to take position gives to political factions the possibility to set the words on the debate but, in some instances, it can also prevent other groups to offer valuable support, for the sake of differentiation. Secondly, Koistinen and Perkiö argue that “different BI proposals appeal to different values” (2014) which is highlighting the importance of the cultural factor regarding the *psychological feasibility* of BI. For the authors, aligning the discursive battle to the targeted political agents' values will improve the achievability of BI. This is answering to the necessity of legitimating an innovative public policy by influencing individuals' interpretation of the current political changes. This twofold argumentation has the merit to highlight the dynamic underlying the concept of the political feasibility. Regarding these conclusions, there is no doubt that the political discourse used by the policy-makers is of primary importance. By setting the words on the debate in a proper way, political factions will be able to shape the general opinion – considered as volatile – in order to increase the legitimacy and the credibility of the idea (i.e *psychological feasibility*). But by doing so, they will also run the risk of provoking the rise of a disagreement between – and within – the political factions on potentially conflictual details (i.e *strategic feasibility*).

Based on these theoretical considerations, this research is focusing on one mean which policy-makers have at their disposal to frame the debate about a given policy, the BI in our case. We study how the use of metaphors in political discourse can frame opinions of participants to an experiment.

The framing impact of metaphors

It has been demonstrated in cognitive linguistics that metaphors are a central component of human cognition, being “a central cognitive process for abstract conceptualization and reasoning” (Johnson, 2010, p.412). This means that metaphors could impact the cognitive mechanisms of individuals (Bougher, 2012). 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). They in a way transfer their knowledge from one domain to another one. This mechanism of inference, or of analogical reasoning, is said to be based on information shortcuts drawn on what the metaphor evokes for the individual.

In this research, we are primarily interested in the influence that metaphors could exert on the political decision-making process of citizens. We understand metaphors 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). The political arena is a fruitful ground for metaphors given the relatively high level of abstraction of the concepts used to reflect politics (Semino, 2008). When citizens have to make political decisions, they may be helped by metaphors recalling them some knowledge structures of other domains which they are more familiar with. This analogical reasoning eases the decision-making but at the same time tends to frame their views on the political debate at stake.

As Bougher (2012) highlighted, how citizens make decisions strongly depends on how they understand the political world. If metaphors were proved to be able to shape the way citizens do consider their own political decisions, they should be studied with the greatest attention. A growing strand of the literature already scrutinises the influence of metaphors on political reasoning. This can be explained by two main factors. On the one hand, most of our political concepts are metaphorical in nature (Lakoff, 1996). This means that our understanding of complex and abstract political concepts and processes is based on conceptual metaphors. This has been confirmed by numerous studies showing the importance of metaphors in various kinds of political discourse, including elite discourse (see for instance Charteris-Black, 2011, 2013; Debras and L’Hôte, 2015, L’Hôte, 2012), media discourse (Musolff, 2004) or citizen discourse (Perrez and Reuchamps, 2014, 2015c).

On the other hand, metaphors are central to the domain of politics because they have the potential to frame the debate (Lakoff, 2004) and indirectly convey hidden ideologies (Goatly, 2007). Framing can 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, “metaphor helps construct particular aspects of reality and reproduce (or subvert) dominant schemas” (Koller, 2009, p.121). Because a metaphor stimulates analogies by only highlighting some elements of the concepts, the remaining elements are inevitably hidden by the metaphor, what could induce a biased vision of the debate on which to make a decision (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). This is precisely *how* the use of given metaphors might impact citizens’ representations of political issues and influence the way they build their opinion.

This framing function of metaphors implicitly suggests that they influence or even determine the representations of a given reality in the receiver’s mind. However, in the literature, this political impact of metaphors is often taken for granted, as if the production of a particular metaphor automatically triggered different representations of a given entity (Perrez & Reuchamps, 2015a). Three studies of Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011, 2013, 2015) tend to confirm this influential role of metaphors on reasoning. In their contributions, they aim at assessing what role metaphors play on how people reason about crime. Based on a set of experiments, including a stimulus text in which crime was alternatively presented as a virus or a beast, they observed that the participants tended to significantly opt for solutions that were consistent with the frame instantiated by the metaphor, notably more enforcement measures when crime was compared to a beast than when it was compared to a virus. These findings lead the authors to the conclusion that “even minimal (one-word) metaphors can significantly shift people’s representations and reasoning about important real-life domains” (Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011, p.10).

In a follow-up study, Steen and colleagues (2014) question Thibodeau and Boroditsky’s conclusions by pointing to a series of methodological issues, among which, the absence of a control version of the stimulus text, in which 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. Accordingly, Steen *et al.* (2014) designed a new version of the stimulus text, in which the supporting metaphorical units were replaced by non-metaphorical ones, and added a control condition in which crime was presented as a problem. Their results do not show any effects of the metaphorical frames. All three conditions led the subjects to equally opt for more enforcement-oriented measures, suggesting that the nature of the text itself could trigger this effect.

These contrasting results suggest that the framing function of metaphors should not be considered as an automatic process. Rather, the question is not so much to know if metaphors have an impact on citizens’ political representations and decisions, but rather to understand *under which circumstances* they might influence them: “if metaphorical language can potentially influence people’s views on topics, and consequently their actions, it is important to know under which conditions people are most likely to build representations of a text they read on a metaphorical schema” (Krennmayr *et al.*, 2014, p.67).

Research question

The public opinion towards BI is expected to be volatile given the high level of abstraction of the concept and its ambiguous nature. Both characteristics have the effect of forcing policymakers to align the BI debate with political agents' values thanks to the abundance of available arguments. This responds to the need for policymakers to legitimize and make desirable this new public policy before being able to implement it. Facing the need to increase BI *psychological feasibility* (De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012), decision-makers have the opportunity to exploit public opinion volatility by using discursive tools in order to frame the BI in an advantageous way. In this regard, the use of metaphors is recognized as potentially affecting the way individuals form their opinion and, *in fine*, their political preferences (Perrez & Reuchamps, 2015a). Metaphors could frame public opinion that could in turn be more or less inclined to support a given public policy proposal. This paper focuses on the intermediate stage between the receiving of information and the final opinion of individuals. We shed light on the framing effect of metaphors as such during the opinion formation process, by comparing this to the effect of similar arguments used without metaphors.

Focusing on the opinion formation process rather than on the final political stands of individuals concerning BI is easily justified by the level of advancement of the debate in Belgium. Even though BI has yielded debate in the country for a few decades, political actors are still chilly to adopt a clear position on specific BI models. In comparison with the Swiss, French or Finnish cases where the debate has reached a relative level of maturity, the Belgian situation is still at the stage of an opinion debate. The decision-makers are still testing and framing the general public's opinion. Their aim is still to prepare the general public to a potential agenda setting.

Concretely, we study the framing impact of arguments and metaphors in an experimental design. Our research question is thus specific to the setting of this experiment but aims at reflecting a larger framing mechanism that could take place in the public debate on the BI, when opinions are being formed. Do the arguments and metaphors employed by political actors affect the arguments employed by citizens when they are asked to reflect on the same debate? Our research question unfolds as follows:

How does the framing of an informative text impact the framing of the participants' argumentative text?

Hypotheses

We argue in this paper that individuals are likely to be influenced by the framing impact of metaphors – and arguments related to it – during their opinion formation process. We thus expect respondents to articulate their argumentative text differently according to the experimental treatment. Three hypotheses are suggested.

H1: 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.

H2: 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.

H3: If the informative text contains a metaphor, it is likely that the participants' argumentative texts will contain comparatively more arguments than texts from participants of the related argument's group do.

Since Van Parijs' ground-breaking contribution (1998), the debate about the practicalities around BI policy has triggered a vivid interest amongst scholars. Our hypotheses rely on a broad review of the academic discussions devoted to the normative debate about the liberal-egalitarian case of BI. Since the pragmatic arguments are often related to the normative discussion justifying the implementation of BI, we will determine sets of arguments that are expected in participant's argumentative texts in regard with the literature. These tokens will allow us to identify whether or not the respondents' argumentative answers are articulated in a coherent way depending on the type of argument they were confronted to, and so doing if the presence of an argument or even a metaphor in the informative text was able to influence the content of their argumentative text accordingly.

The argumentation in favour of BI implementation follows a logic constructed around two complementary concepts, that are the independent variables used in our model. Van Parijs (1998) argues that the only mean that we have to achieve a real freedom for all (*H2*) is the distribution of an equal and unconditional (*H1*) income at its highest sustainable level possible to all individuals within the society (Vandenborgh, 2004; Barry B., 1996b). We will therefore consider the argument of unconditionality as turning the debate towards the conditions of BI implementation. The freedom argument is for its part expected to raise concerns about the effects of such a radical reform.

We can divide the diversity of arguments into three types of argumentation, which are expected to be observed in respondents' answers: (a) *Normative considerations*, (b) *Political considerations* and (c) *Pragmatic considerations*. As detailed later, we qualitatively analysed participants' answers to an open-ended question regarding both the definition and their opinion on the BI. Our method required the creation of a reading lecture set up, which provided the opportunity to systematically assess the respondents' answers. Concretely, we built a coherent set of codes based on arguments issued from the literature. This section provides an overview of the scholarly sources that inspired our codes (conveyed in small caps).

H1: The unconditionality argument

Normative considerations. The proponents of the liberal-egalitarian approach consider the unconditionality of treatment as primordial in order to access a society of justice. In their contribution, Widerquist, Vandendorgh, Noguera and De Wispelaere (2013) argue that “most people who favor 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, it remains obvious for several scholars – mostly heirs of Thomas Paine’s (1796) thoughts – that this principle is justified by the natural right (NATURAL RIGHT) of everyone to equally have at their disposal (EQUALITY/EQUITY) the common resources in order to be able to live (Baker, 1992; Van Parijs, 1991; Liebig & Mau, 2002; Barry B., 1996a). However, the BASIC NEEDS argument will not be expected to be activated by the first condition. We consider the meeting of individuals’ basic needs as a step towards achieving the ultimate goal of BI – the maximisation of the real freedom for all. The use of this argument will therefore be expected in the groups’ argumentative texts under the freedom treatment. However, the activation of arguments related to the notions of NATURAL RIGHT and – or – EQUALITY/EQUITY is expected in the unconditionality group.

Political considerations. A more political reading of the debate highlights other arguments justifying the implementation of this public policy. A common diagnostic is made by the advocates of BI when it comes to legitimate its implementation. The current Welfare State is often considered as increasingly inefficient to provide an acceptable security to all strata of the society (SITUATION –) by BI proponents. This is particularly the case concerning the underprivileged groups who are dependants of the benefits and – or – are facing the risk to be blocked in the *unemployment traps* (SOCIAL –; Van Parijs, 2006). We expect respondents to describe these specific groups as being the explicit beneficiaries of the implementation of BI since they are viewed as the first victims of the Welfare State’s failures (UNDERPRIVILEGED PEOPLE). Indeed, BI is often defined as a solution to the ills of society where the means-tested benefits and targeted transfers are unable to answer the “current economic crisis” (ECONOMIC CRISIS) (van der Veen, 1998). Despite the diversity of BI funding proposals, the liberal-egalitarian approach seems to favour the path of a fiscal reform. These proponents want to create a model where BI is constructed as a redistributive tool in line with the value of solidarity. As explained by Van Parijs and Vandendorgh (2005), the reform could impose a flat-tax rate or even a progressive tax rate (TAXES). Nonetheless, other strategies exist like the suppression (SOCIAL SECURITY –) or the diminution of the social security budget (SOCIAL SECURITY +). However, the question of BI funding is somewhat obscured in the current public debate because of the *veil of vagueness* covering such practical considerations. This argument is therefore expected to be hardly mobilized by respondents.

Pragmatic considerations. The core of the expected arguments in respondents’ answers is to be found in the *pragmatic considerations* concerning BI. Its 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 BI (DISCRIMINATIONS)? The combination of both questions will define the level of inclusiveness ensured by BI (ACCESS; Van Parijs, 2006).

Answering to the first question, the advocates of an advanced form of BI defend its transfer to the widest POLITICAL COMMUNITY possible. In this view, the only condition restricting access to BI is the need to be recognized as a member of the targeted political community (MEMBERSHIP CONDITION; Vandendorgh, 2004). Yet, the question of the membership in itself yields tensions between the proponents of an income reserved to the national citizens – in its legal sense (CITIZENSHIP CONDITION; Van Parijs & Vandendorgh, 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 to the Nation-States' scale (SCALE; NATIONAL LEVEL) even if other models wish to apply it to other areas¹ (Vandendorgh, 2004; Van Parijs, 2006; Van Parijs & Vandendorgh, 2005). The consequence is that there is no purely UNCONDITIONAL model of BI unless it is intended to be applied to the whole world.

Answering to the second question, the advocates of BI – in its most radical configuration – are preaching the non-restricted transfer of the income to all people (UNIVERSAL). The proponents of a harder line are ready to accept the idea of BI without accepting its pure universality (DISCRIMINATIONS). Even though Rawls never integrally accepted the idea of BI, the conversation between him and Van Parijs concerning the problematic of the *Surfers in Malibu* (Barry B. 1996a) showcases the importance of this issue in the philosophical debate. According to the latter, those who make the choice to live on the fringes of society (*free-riders*) should not receive BI. This problematic confirms the fact that we can logically expect the occurrence of discriminatory arguments based on the merit criterion (DISCRIMINATION MERIT) in respondents' answers. For its part, the freedom argument's condition (H2) seems more likely to address this problematic through the use of arguments focused on BI outputs.

H2: The freedom argument

Normative considerations. One of the most controversial stances of BI is its relationship with the reciprocity principle (Vandendorgh, 2004). By causing the decoupling of wage and work (Standing, 2002), BI hits a central norm of our societies based on the work value and the contribution to the common good. van der Veen (1998) explains that what is morally hurting “is that cutting the link between transfer income and work of the able-bodied and potentially employable violates an intuitive notion of fairness as reciprocity”. Following his assumption, what is blamed on BI is that it announces the demotivation to work and, therefore, a drastic increase of laziness among society. The apparition of FREE-RIDERS caused by BI implementation (CONSEQUENCES –) is certainly best explained by Van Parijs (1991) in his answer to Rawls objections towards the moral foundations of BI.

¹ An example of a regional implementation can be found in the Alaska's Permanent Fund (see Palmer, 1997). But some scholars also claim for the implementation of a *Euro-dividend* (see Van Parijs & Vandendorgh, 2001).

Political considerations. The political considerations about BI are similar to those mentioned in the first hypothesis. The same diagnostic of the failed Welfare State is made as a starting point for the BI legitimization process as a solution to current problems. Yet – in line with our reasoning – the freedom condition is considered as inducing a redirection of the debate towards the consequences of a BI implementation. Even though arguments about the critics of the current system are still expected (SITUATION –), the frequency of their occurrence will probably be lower in the freedom groups.

Besides this, the question of BI funding is also expected to be asked by the respondents (FUNDING). This expectation follows the same argument used in the first hypothesis. The issue of BI funding is certainly one of the biggest challenges faced by its advocates. The subject is therefore logically occupying the academic and public debate. However, answers linking its funding proposals to a potential effect on the freedom gain induced by BI are less common. We consider that respondents are expected not to go into the details but only refer to the question in itself.

Pragmatic considerations. The freedom condition being considered as a consequence of BI, it is expected that *pragmatic considerations* of the second hypothesis' groups would be oriented towards a discussion about the outputs of a BI implementation (CONSEQUENCES). In a public policy legitimation process, it is natural to see decision-makers stressing many positive results induced by a reform (CONSEQUENCES +; De Wispelaere & Noguera, 2012). However, it is inevitable to also see emerging protests about potential negative consequences (CONSEQUENCES –). Plunging back in our theoretical framework's literature, we detect a two-steps causal logic that separates the moment of the BI implementation and the reaching of its final aim. The maximisation of real freedom (LIBERTY +) – and anybody's opportunities (OPPORTUNITIES) – seems to be conditioned to the meeting of individuals' basic needs (BASIC NEEDS; Barry B., 1996a; Van Parijs 1998). Yet, it is interesting to note that this requirement also allows an augmentation of the societal cohesion and the general quality of life (QUALITY +) which are not unrelated to achieving the goal of BI. As Offe (2013) suggests, a major impact expected by the reform is the reintegration of people that were marginalized by the labour market and who would be again looked upon as legitimate citizens (REINTEGRATION).

In parallel, the question of the regularity of BI payments has a certain importance in the theoretical debate although it seems not to be primordial in the public debate. As Van Parijs and Vandenborgh (2005) emphasize, the frequency of transfers can have consequences on the level of freedom of choice let to the recipients (TEMPORALITY). However, this is also an element obscured by the *veil of vagueness* in the public debate. It is therefore expected that respondents would evoke the issue without going further in the reasoning.

H3: The reinforcing effect of metaphors

In regard with the metaphors' framing impact theories (Thibodeau and Boroditsky 2011, 2013, 2015), the presence of metaphors in the informative texts is expected to reinforce the effect previously induced by the arguments they are related to. As detailed earlier in this

paper, metaphors are a powerful mechanism that could ease the understanding process, and so doing, could induce the use of even more arguments than an argumentation without a metaphor could do.

Data collection and analysis

Experimental design

This paper's design is experimental. The use of such a design is supported by the fact that our main objective lies less in the representativeness of the sample than in providing empirical data about the arguments' and metaphors' potential framing impact on the political preferences of individuals. In other words, our aim is to highlight the potential existence of a causal mechanism and the logic underlying it, not its generalization towards the overall population. Besides this, our experiment echoes the call of some scholars like Noguera and De Wispelaere (2006) to develop the use of experimental studies in the study of BI. By addressing the *psychological feasibility* of BI through the study of the *judgments* formation process pointed out and defined by Camerer and Loewenstein (2004) and taken up by Noguera and De Wispelaere (2006) in their argumentation, our laboratory experiment is situated in the lineage of research designs providing a better understanding of the challenges posed by the BI project.

We set up an experimental design based on different versions of an informative text about the potential implementation of a basic income in Belgium. This input text was inspired by an article published in the Belgian daily newspaper *Le Soir* (29 July 2015) and can be defined as the neutral condition in our survey (neutral condition, see Box 1).

Box 1 : Text displayed to the respondents (translated from French to English)

Some people propose the idea of a universal allocation, also called – depending on the country – basic income, unconditional basic income or Citizen's income, which can be defined as: “an income payed by a political community to all its members, on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement”. [*We could see it as (ARGUMENT/METAPHOR)*]

Although this idea has long been connected to a gentle utopia entertained by intellectuals (but defended 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 energetic benefits of the state.

In our country, the debate is underway. And you, what do you think?

We expanded this input text in two different ways in order to create a design resulting in seven experimental conditions. We first designed two conditions by introducing in the informative text an argument in favour of the implementation of basic income; one highlighting the freedom that each individual would earn thanks to this system (*freedom*

condition, see Table 2), and another one stressing its unconditional nature (*unconditionality* condition, see Table 2). Second, we expanded both texts with metaphors that were expected to frame the basic income issue even further. We more specifically produced a “base frame” metaphor and a “springboard” metaphor stressing the idea of freedom (*base frame* condition and *springboard* condition, see Table 2) and a “pocket money” metaphor linked to the notion of unconditionality (*pocket money* condition, see Table 2). In brief, we thus created seven experimental conditions: a control condition without informative text, one neutral condition, two “argument” conditions and three “metaphor” conditions.

Table 2 : Design of the experiment

Condition	Additional sentence	N
Group 1: <i>Control</i>	No text	98
Group 2: <i>Neutral text</i>	No additional sentence	98
Group 3: <i>Argument (Freedom)</i>	“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: <i>Metaphor (Base frame)</i>	“We could see it as a <u>base frame</u> supplied by the State so that the citizens can <u>build</u> their life freely without having to be concerned about material constraints.”	95
Group 5: <i>Metaphor (Springboard)</i>	“We could see it as a springboard supplied by the State so that the citizens can freely <u>launch</u> themselves into life without any material constraints.”	99
Group 6: <i>Argument (Unconditionality)</i>	“We could see it as an income that citizens receive from the State by the very fact that they are members of it.”	97
Group 7: <i>Metaphor (Pocket money)</i>	“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

As shown in table 2, we maintained the exact same structure of the informative text when expanding it with the stimulus sentences in order to be able to pinpoint the specific influence of any specific condition.

The experiment was conducted in 2015 at the start of the school year among 686 first year-students from various fields of study (economics and management, social and political sciences, linguistics and literature, or communication) from two Belgian universities (University of Louvain and University of Liège). The respondents were randomly allocated to one experimental condition, each condition gathering approximately a hundred participants (see table 2). We tested for the homogeneity of these groups on socio-demographic characteristics, but also on political opinions, what reinforces our confidence in attributing any variation in the respondents’ argumentation to any specific stimulus.

Qualitative content analysis

This paper relies on one main open-ended question asked to participants right after having presented them the informative text on the BI (including or not arguments and metaphors). The respondents were asked to explain in their own words what the basic income means for them and to then detail their opinion about it. Although some participants answered with a few words, most of them wrote a few lines.

These qualitative outputs from the participants were subjected to a systematic coding procedure. The entire participant's answer was thoroughly read through and the coder did each time consider which codes relate to this answer. Obviously, several codes were allocated to every answer since the short texts were almost all multidimensional. The coding was done by some authors of this paper, and discussed and debated at several meetings in order to make sure that everyone agreed with the decisions made. All questionable cases were raised and a decision was made altogether. A detailed codebook was also created in order for the entire team to be aware of the precise meaning of every code. In this codebook, we included also a typical answer that would fit in the given code, to avoid any confusion. We started the analysis with a certain number of coding categories, encompassing the themes which we expected to pop up in the written answers from participants. New codes were added throughout the coding process, and some codes were erased or merged when required. As detailed in a previous section, our coding framework was established on the basis of the literature on the basic income.

Concretely, the final coding framework consists of 8 main codes detailed into more specific codes. (1) The first coding category relates to the positioning of participants towards the BI. Is s/he clearly in favour or against the BI? Or is the answer neutral? (2) The second category refers to the concepts used by the participant (e.g. utopia or equality). (3) We also coded answers regarding whether they refer to the means through which the BI could be implemented, for instance the access to the BI, any form of discrimination or the conditions to be entitled to benefit from it. (4) The geographical scale that was envisaged for the BI, or not, is the fourth category. Do the answers mention the Belgian State, the Belgian regions or communities, the local level, or the supranational level? (5) Answers also tackle the temporality, i.e. how often should the basic income be paid to the beneficiaries. Do respondents raise this point? Is it a monthly or yearly basis? (6) How could we finance this system is the sixth main code (e.g. through tax or social security). (7) The broad theme of the consequences of the implementation of the BI was divided into several codes, either positive negative consequences, regarding inequalities, quality of life, poverty, unemployment, freedom, etc. (8) The last topic refers to the current situation. We coded this theme when participants raised any idea related to how Belgium is functioning right now, be it as regards economy, society or politics. We also distinguished between positive or negative appraisal of the situation. Our full coding framework is available upon request.

Significant differences in the frequency of codes for each treatment of the experiment were then sought. We compared all groups of participants with the goal of uncovering whether the

presence of a code in lesser or greater extent in a given group in comparison to the other ones was a mere coincidence or if this rather reflected a pattern. Chi-square tests allowed us to distinguish between random occurrences and repeated regularities. Based on these quantitative figures and tests, we then qualitatively investigated why differences exist in some coding categories. The results of this analysis are presented in the following section.

Analysis

H1: When participants are told that the BI is unconditional

Normative considerations. We expected two main arguments to be much more activated in respondents' answers if they were in the unconditionally treatment rather than in other conditions. Those are *normative considerations* related to the theoretical argument of equality – or equity – and more importantly the natural right to receive BI. The data tend to reject our assumptions. Both the EQUALITY/EQUITY and NATURAL RIGHT arguments do not seem to be activated in a significant way by the participants from the unconditionality condition. However, what is interesting to note is the way the BASIC NEEDS argument is activated in the answers from the unconditionality argument's group compared to the neutral treatment. Our findings reveal that the unconditionality argument's condition deviates respondents' argumentation from this central issue, since only 17.3% of them are referring to this argument against 28.1% in the neutral group. The proportion among the freedom argument's condition (38.6%) tends to confirm that BI is most likely to be described as meeting individuals' basic needs by respondents facing the freedom condition which gives us already an element to answer hypothesis 2.

Political considerations. The results regarding the arguments related to *political considerations* towards BI are interesting in two respects. Firstly, they show that the general discursive strategy that consists in denouncing a current situation of latent socio-economic crisis to legitimize BI can be considered as successful. On the one hand, this is shown by the higher number of occurrences of the SITUATION – and ECONOMIC CRISIS arguments when respondents receive some (and not any) information about BI, i.e. when we compare all conditions to the control group that did not receive any text. It has to be noted that the references to the SOCIAL – argument do not follow this clear pattern. On the other hand, the fact that the references to these three arguments are more present when respondents receive an argument text confirms that participants integrated these arguments in their opinion formation process.

Secondly, our findings prove the expected framing effect of the unconditionality argument's condition concerning both SOCIAL – and ECONOMIC CRISIS arguments. Indeed, while a negligible part of the respondents from the freedom argument (6.8% and 12.5%) and the neutral groups (4.5% and 5.6%) refers to this argument, 16% of those in the unconditionality group refer to SOCIAL – and 13.6% mention ECONOMIC CRISIS. The framing effect on the SOCIAL – argument is even more striking when we only consider respondents referring to SITUATION – (See Table 3). While 30.7% of the respondents in the neutral and freedom groups

are also mobilizing the SOCIAL – argument, 61.9% of the unconditionality group’s respondents refer to a bad current social situation. The question of the Welfare State’s failure to ensure social justice for everyone seems to be more likely to be mobilized in the opinion formation process when respondents receive some information. It also appears that this trend is strengthened by a political discourse stressing the unconditional character of BI.

Table 3 : Coding frequency of ECONOMIC CRISIS and SOCIAL –, among participants referring to SITUATION –

	Control group	Neutral group	Unconditionality group	Freedom group
SITUATION –	10.5%	14.6%	25.9%	22.7%
ECONOMIC CRISIS	22.2%	38.4%	52.3%	55%
SOCIAL –	44.4%	30.7%	61.9% (sign.)	30%

Regarding the mobilization of the argument stating that disadvantaged – or poor – people are the explicit beneficiaries of this measure, the results once again confirm the potential framing effect of the unconditionality condition. Both unconditionality groups refer more to the UNDERPRIVILEGED PEOPLE argument than the neutral group (6.7%) but only the unconditionality group’s effect is statistically confirmed. While 16% of the unconditionality group mobilizes this argument, only 11.4% of the freedom group is referring to it. However, no results are binding together this argument and the denunciation of a negative current situation even when we only consider respondents mobilizing either the SOCIAL – or the ECONOMIC CRISIS arguments.

Finally, the unconditionality argument’s condition seems to effectively frame the debate not especially on the issue of BI funding in itself, but rather on a direct potential answer to this challenge. Indeed, 9.9 % of the respondents having received the informative text including the unconditionality condition specifically refer to the possibility to finance BI through the profits from TAXES, against only between 2.3% and 5.7% of the respondents from the other groups. Yet, our analysis does not allow us to know if these respondents are just referring to, advocating for or opposing this proposal.

Pragmatic considerations. Two main issues are at stake regarding the expected *pragmatic considerations* of the respondents. We are expecting the respondents to particularly mobilize arguments assessing the level of inclusiveness of BI by articulating both dimensions of inherent to the concept: its unconditional and universal nature. Even if the occurrences of the arguments related to the ACCESS issue are similar between the neutral and unconditionality groups (84%), the freedom group addresses less this issue (78.4%). Findings on the references made to *political community* concept are going in the same direction. No framing effect can nonetheless be surely detected here.

Concerning the conditional dimension CONDITIONS, the first observation is that this issue is indeed included in the public debate. More than 50% of each informed groups’ respondents raise this issue in a way or another. It also appears that the CITIZENSHIP CONDITION is the most

commonly mentioned requirement to access BI amongst the groups. Compared to the neutral (10.1%) and freedom groups (10.2%), it appears that the unconditionality argument's condition seems to frame the opinion formation process more on both the CITIZENSHIP CONDITION (49.4%) and MEMBERSHIP CONDITION (21%). Yet, another observation is confirming our hypothesis. We find that 21.6% of the freedom group's respondents do not mobilize at all arguments linked to the questions asked by the unconditional nature of BI (NEUTRAL CONDITION). This number is 9.2% higher than the neutral group's results and 13% higher of the unconditionality one. It confirms that the freedom argument's condition frames the opinion formation process in another direction. This observation has to be considered together with the results obtained for all four conditional arguments. Those codes are more used by respondents from the unconditionality group. Moreover, the fact that this group is using fewer arguments describing BI as being – purely – unconditional confirms that respondents facing our experimental condition have greater considerations regarding the restrictive criteria they want to allocate to BI.

Finally, the question of the geographical scale of the aimed political community is not helpful regarding our hypothesis. Indeed, like scholars point out, the geographical area the most commonly linked to BI is the national scale. Even if this concern is not significantly present in both control and neutral groups, freedom and unconditionality groups refer to the same extent to this argument.

Table 4 : Coding frequency of conditional arguments

	Control group	Neutral group	Unconditionality group	Freedom group
CONDITIONS	30.2% (sign.)	53.9%	74.1% (sign.)	53.4%
CITIZENSHIP CONDITION	24.4% (sign.)	37.1%	49.4% (sign.)	37.5%
RESIDENTIAL CONDITION	3.5%	7.9%	9.9%	4.5%
MEMBERSHIP CONDITION	3.5% (sign.)	10.1%	21% (sign.)	10.2%

Concerning the universal dimension of BI, our hypothesis anticipating a stronger presence of discriminatory arguments in the unconditionality group is partially rejected. Indeed, only one result supports this assertion. While 11.2% of the neutral group's respondents are defining or describing BI without any mention of the questions linked to its universal dimension (NEUTRAL DISCRIMINATIONS), 8.6% of the unconditionality group and 17% of the freedom group ignore this dimension in their argumentative text. It means that when respondents are facing our experimental conditions, the freedom argument does decrease concerns about BI access' requirements. However, none of our other results can reinforce this assumption since the unconditionality group is not behaving as expected concerning the other codes. Moreover, this assumption is made by taking our hypothesis in the opposite way. Finally, regarding the notion of reciprocity, it seems that the treatment does not particularly activate the use of the

expected argument. The argument of DISCRIMINATION BASED ON MERIT is insignificant regardless the group considered.

To sum up, it seems clear that the conditional dimension of the debate around BI is the most significant one when it comes for respondents to form their opinion. Even if a part of respondents' answers integrates arguments describing BI as being essentially universal (between 70.5% and 79% for all informed groups), our experimental treatment mostly seems to enhance considerations about the characteristics that people have to have in order for them to receive the BI. While respondents from the freedom group develop in a weaker way arguments linked to this dimension, the unconditionality group does it by mostly referring to a BI only distributed to the citizens.

H2: When participants are told that the BI leads to freedom

Normative considerations. The normative considerations, expected to be activated by the freedom experimental condition, are exclusively linked to the problem of the reciprocity. Two complementary arguments (CONSEQUENCES – and FREE-RIDERS) are at stake here and we have decided to consider them as a whole. For almost 80% of the neutral and both conditional groups' respondents referring to one or several negative consequences of BI, the implementation of BI is likely to increase the risk of passive behaviour in society, i.e. that people will not be willing to work anymore. While the respondents from the uninformed group employ them in a much less strong way, the respondents having received neutral information use them almost three times more. Yet, facing the unconditionality argument's condition seems to slightly decrease their use whereas the freedom group activates them more frequently than the neutral group. Nonetheless, these results are not statistically significant and do not allow us to conclude if our experimental conditions induce or not a framing impact on this argument. The only striking observation is that the issue of *free-riders* seems not to be as important in the opinion formation process as it should be regarding the prominence of this debate in the literature.

Political considerations. As predicted, we can find out a certain discourse linked to the general diagnose made on the Welfare State's inefficiency in the freedom group's answers. Yet, stressing the potential emancipatory effect of BI in the political discourse is not helpful for political actors if they want to frame the debate on this issue. As raised earlier, the question of the Welfare State's failure to ensure socio-economic justice for everyone seems more likely to be mobilized in the opinion formation process when respondents are facing a political discourse stressing the unconditional character of BI.

Results on the way respondents argue about the challenge of BI FUNDING follow the same trend as those on the reciprocity issue. The diversity of arguments addressed by at least 20% of each informed group and 16.3% of the control group shows the significance of this issue in the opinion formation process (See table 5). However, none of our results helps us conclude if one of the other experimental conditions is particularly framing the debate on this important aspect of BI proposals. Nonetheless, our prediction concerning the construction of the

freedom group’s argumentative texts was right. Respondents from the freedom group were not expected to go further in their reasoning on the subject. We expected that they would generally address the controversy that BI can engender. The fact that less than 6% of them referred to one financing strategy confirms our assumption. In comparison, 9.9% of the unconditionality group referred to a BI that would be funded thanks to the TAXES revenues.

Table 5 : Coding frequency of funding-related arguments

	Control group	Neutral group	Unconditionality group	Freedom group
FUNDING	16.3%	21.3%	24.7%	30.7%
TAXES	2.3%	3.4%	9.9% (sign.)	5.7%
SOCIAL SECURITY REMAINS	1.2%	3.4%	6.2%	3.4%
SOCIAL SECURITY DISAPPEARS	5.8%	0%	2.5%	4.5%

Pragmatic considerations. The core of our second hypothesis relies on the results concerning the pragmatic considerations we predicted to be activated by the freedom argument’s condition in respondents’ argumentative texts. As expected, the experimental argument of freedom does frame the debate on the main outputs of BI implementation. As it is shown by our results, respondents from the freedom group are more likely to mobilize arguments linked to the (positive) consequences of BI when they are asked to form and develop their opinion on this issue. The first indicator of this phenomenon can be found in the way the codes CONSEQUENCES and CONSEQUENCES + are activated in each group (See table 6).

This phenomenon is even more striking when we only consider respondents having referred to one or several positive or negative consequences of BI (CONSEQUENCES) in their argumentative text (See table 6). As shown by our results, receiving no information at all leads respondents to intuitively refer to the positive consequences of BI rather than to the negative ones. The respondents who received neutral information tend to refer less to the positive consequences and more to the negative consequences of BI than the control group. Respondents from the unconditionality group activate less both positive and negative consequences’ arguments than the neutral group. Finally, respondents from the freedom group who referred to the consequences of BI are more likely to employ positive arguments than the neutral group but they refer in a same way to the negative ones. In other words, the strategy to use discursive arguments stressing the potential freedom provided by BI seems to be the best one to legitimate the public policy. However, discourse producers need to pay attention to the counterproductive effect that this may have on individuals’ opinion formation process since the use of such an argument also seems to drive them to think about the negative outcomes of BI.

Table 6 : Coding frequency of consequences-related arguments

	Control group	Neutral group	Unconditionality group	Freedom group
CONSEQUENCES	55.8% (sign.)	74.2%	71.6%	85.2% (sign.)
- CONS. +	- 95.8%	- 90.9%	- 86.2%	- 92%
- CONS. -	- 20.8% (sign.)	- 42.4%	- 37.9%	- 42.6%
CONSEQUENCES +	53.5% (sign.)	67.4%	61.7%	78.4% (sign.)
CONSEQUENCES -	11.6% (sign.)	31.5%	27.2%	36.4%

Two additional arguments expected to be activated by the freedom group confirm our hypothesis. 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. These results can be linked to the framing impact of our experimental argument since the unconditionality group refers in the same way as the neutral group concerning the QUALITY + argument (38.3%) and since these participants seriously differ for the BASIC NEEDS argument (28.1% vs. 17.3%). The results for arguments OPPORTUNITIES and LIBERTY + are not statistically significant in the freedom group. But we can find an answer to our question in the unconditionality group's results. Indeed, if we cannot conclude that the freedom argument's condition is able to frame the debate on these arguments, we can nonetheless say that the unconditionality argument deviates the respondents' opinion formation process from these considerations. The figures are unusually low since 3.7% refer to OPPORTUNITIES and 4.9% to LIBERTY +. Finally, the level of significance of the results for the arguments of REINTEGRATION and TEMPORALITY does not allow us to provide an answer to our hypothesis.

H3: When participants are confronted to metaphors

We expect metaphors to significantly strengthen the occurrence of the arguments expected for the unconditionality and freedom groups. Each metaphorical group will therefore be compared to the argumentative group to which it relates. When analysing the data, we found out that the informative texts including metaphors had four different types of effect on the respondents' opinion formation process. In the first case, metaphors confirm hypothesis 3 when it regards the reinforced framing effect. In the second case, metaphors do not confirm hypothesis 3, but they contribute to confirm the other hypotheses when they activate the expected arguments in the exact same way as their related argument groups. In the third case, a framing impact specific to metaphors is highlighted when only the metaphorical groups are significantly activating specific arguments. And fourthly, metaphors can produce a counterproductive effect either when they frame the debate in a non-expected way or when they do not activate the arguments at a significantly higher level than the neutral group. In brief, this testifies that metaphors do not have homogeneous effects.

Concerning the pocket money metaphor, the results tend to nuance our hypothesis. Whether the *normative* or *political considerations* referred to in hypothesis 1 are at stake, no result allow us to fully confirm hypothesis 3. On the one hand, the pocket money metaphor only confirms hypothesis 1 by activating respondents' considerations about UNDERPRIVILEGED PEOPLE (15.2%) and SITUATION – (26.6%) at the same level as the unconditionality argument. On the other hand, the metaphor produces a counterproductive effect by almost dividing by two unconditionality group's references to both ECONOMIC CRISIS and SOCIAL – (See Table 3). This phenomenon is confirmed when we only consider respondents having employed SITUATION – in their argumentation. In parallel, the metaphor also seems to create a framing impact on its own regarding the high level of references made by this group to ECONOMIC –. It means that besides diverting respondents' attention from the classic rhetoric about the Welfare State's social and economic failure, the metaphor focuses their reasoning on another argument playing against BI implementation: the impossibility to finance it. Finally, it has also to be noted that the TAXES argument seems to be only related to the use of the unconditionality argument's condition (9.9%) since the pocket money group weakly refers to this argument (3.8%). This result is certainly related to the fact that the pocket money is probably seen as provided by the parents who are financing it through their monetary wealth.

Yet, an interesting element emerges from the *pragmatic considerations* emphasized in hypothesis 1. Even if the metaphor raises the attention on the question of BI inclusiveness in general (91.1%) compared to the unconditionality argument's condition (84%), the pocket money group seems to have a more precise idea of the people who are or should be concerned by the BI. Indeed, concerning the question of BI universality, the lower number of references to UNIVERSAL (79% to 75.9%) is accompanied by a significant higher number of references to discriminatory arguments in general (7.4% against 19%). The respondents from the pocket money group are more likely to consider the BI as being reserved to one or another layer of the targeted population. And this target population, the metaphorical group is more likely to represent it as being Belgian. In fact, on the one hand, this group is less likely to describe BI as being either restricted or purely unconditional. But on the other hand, they are more to evoke the CITIZENSHIP CONDITION in their argumentative text which comes along with a lower number of references to the notion of MEMBERSHIP CONDITION. The specificity of the pocket money metaphor is that it is the only one of our experimental design – with the springboard condition – to significantly situate this citizenship at the NATIONAL LEVEL (See Table 7). This could be explained by the fact that pocket money is naturally linked to the linguistic domain of the family, which is by definition a closed-ended and well identified community with rigid access criteria. The metaphor stimulates this family idea in participants' minds, and so doing they refer to the Belgian state as a household for the BI.

Table 7 : Coding frequency of arguments related to conditions

	Control group	Neutral group	Pocket money group (Met)	Unconditionality group	Springboard group (Met)
UNCONDITIONAL	34.9%	38.2%	27.8%	19.8% (sign.)	43% (sign.)
NEUTRAL CONDITIONS	7%	12.4%	15.2%	8.6%	15.1%
CONDITIONS	30.2% (sign.)	53.9%	68.4% (sign.)	74.1% (sign.)	50%
CITIZENSHIP CONDITION	24.4% (sign.)	37.1%	53.2% (sign.)	49.4% (sign.)	38.4%
RESIDENTIAL CONDITION	3.5%	7.9%	6.3%	9.9%	4.7%
MEMBERSHIP CONDITION	3.5% (sign.)	6.3%	10.1%	21% (sign.)	7%
CITIZENSHIP COND./NATIONAL LEVEL	57% (sign.)	60% (sign.)	92% (sign.)	82%	90% (sign.)

Our third hypothesis is also rejected by the analysis of the springboard group’s results. Indeed, our prediction was right only for one argument while the springboard condition contributes to partly confirm hypothesis 2 or – by the cognitive elements that it activates on the part of the respondents – weaken the latter. The springboard metaphor leads participants to refer to the potential CONSEQUENCES of BI implementation and to mention much more negative ones. This observation therefore means that the use of this metaphor is likely to influence respondents to consider in a greater way a set of potential negative outputs produced by the reform. Yet, concluding that those results confirm hypothesis 3 must be done with caution since the freedom argument was not formally linked to a significant framing of respondents’ attention to this association of arguments in the discussion of hypothesis 2.

Nonetheless, the results also allow us to strengthen our conclusions about the framing impact of the freedom argument. Indeed, crossing the occurrences of CONSEQUENCES and CONSEQUENCES + in the springboard group (91.7%) leads us to confirm that people having faced the freedom argument’s condition (92%) are more likely to consider the positive consequences of BI than both the neutral (90.9%) and unconditionality groups (86.2%).

Finally, the specificities of the springboard metaphor allow us to both confirm hypothesis 2 and weaken it. First, three arguments took separately and not significantly activated by the freedom argument increase the trend for groups focused on the freedom condition to orient their argumentation towards the *pragmatic considerations* pointed in our theoretical discussion of hypothesis 2. This is the case for the argument related to the challenge of BI FUNDING, the NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES of BI and the FREE-RIDERS problem (See Table 8). Second, the metaphorical group goes in the opposite direction by increasing *pragmatic considerations* oriented towards arguments which were expected – and confirmed – in hypothesis 1. Indeed, the springboard group follows a similar logic as the pocket money

group regarding the identification of individuals potentially concerned by BI implementation. While they are defining this community as being the national citizens (see Table 7), the respondents from the springboard group are also less likely to mention the fact that BI could potentially provide more freedom, increase the quality of life but also meet individuals’ basic needs (see Table 9). It means that by using this metaphor, discourse producers give themselves the possibility to address topics theoretically related to the *unconditionality* approach of BI but they are also likely to lead individuals to consider this public policy more negatively or – at least – consider it to a lesser extent as providing substantial benefits.

Table 8 : Coding frequency of pragmatic considerations’ codes, focus on the springboard metaphor’ effect

	Control group	Neutral group	Freedom group	Springboard group (Met)
FUNDING	16.3%	21.3%	30.7%	32.6% (sign.)
CONSEQUENCES -	11.6% (sign.)	31.5%	36.4%	44.2% (sign.)
FREE-RIDERS	9.3% (sign.)	24.7%	29.5%	34.9% (sign.)

The third metaphorical informative text includes the base frame metaphor. Once again, our results nuance hypothesis 3. The metaphor condition confirms the framing impact of our experimental argument concerning the *pragmatic considerations* about BI consequences. The occurrences of the arguments CONSEQUENCES (82.5%), CONSEQUENCES + (78.8%) and CONSEQUENCES - (37.5%) are at the same level as the freedom group. Yet, when we look more precisely to the share of respondents having referred to BI consequences, we discover that the base frame metaphor confirms hypothesis 3. Indeed, the activation of both positive and negative consequences codes is increased in the metaphorical group by 3% compared to the freedom argument’s condition.

These results put us on the trail of other potential effects on the different possible consequential arguments of BI. The base frame condition frames the opinion formation process on the fact that BI can be considered as providing more OPPORTUNITIES (30%) and FREEDOM (21.3%) which are both arguments expected to be found in the freedom-focused group’s argumentations. This framing effect is specific to the metaphor in itself since the freedom and springboard groups refer less to these codes. Yet, even if the base frame condition is activating to a greater extent arguments expected in hypothesis 2, it is also going against that by deviating respondents’ attention from the arguments of BASIC NEEDS and QUALITY + (See Table 9) which is rather counterintuitive. It could probably be explained by the fact that a base frame is *de facto* defined as meeting individuals’ basic needs and improving their quality of life. It could explain why respondents facing the metaphor describe BI in terms of direct output rather than what is inherent to the concept of base frame.

Table 9 : Coding frequency of consequences-related arguments, focus on the springboard and base frame metaphor's effect

	Control group	Neutral group	Freedom group	Springboard group	Base frame group
BASIC NEEDS	31.4%	28.1%	38.6% (sign.)	30.2%	27.5%
QUALITY +	20.9% (sign.)	38.2%	44.3%	36%	33.8%
FREEDOM +	7%	10.1%	18.2%	15.1%	21.3% (sign.)
OPPORTUNITIES	2.3% (sign.)	6.7%	10.2%	15.1%	30% (sign.)

We also uncovered this counterproductive effect in other settings. Firstly, facing the condition seems to reduce the attention to the question of the regularity of payment of the BI. While this issue was mentioned in similar proportions as in the other groups (around 12%), the metaphor considerably deviates the considerations of the group's respondents both from the argument of BI TEMPORALITY (3.8%) and the possibility to see it paid on a monthly basis (1.3%). This phenomenon can be explained in light of the pocket money group's results. Indeed, a base frame is probably understood by respondents as being a heavy and rigid device slipped under individuals' feet, whereas giving a pocket money is a fluid and regular transfer of money such as the payment of a salary at the end of the month. The base frame metaphor does not activate issues related to finances, on the contrary to pocket money.

Besides, another interesting phenomenon is observed when we look at the *pragmatic considerations* expected in hypothesis 1. The metaphoric conditions enhance respondents' interest in the question of BI degree of inclusiveness, i.e. the ACCESS code pops up in about 90% of the metaphorical cases versus much less in the other treatments. This trend is confirmed by the parallel higher occurrence of UNCONDITIONAL argument, and to a non-significant extent of the UNIVERSAL argument (See table 10).

Table 10 : Coding frequency of degree of inclusiveness-related codes, focus on the springboard and base frame metaphor's effect

	Control group	Neutral group	Freedom group	Springboard group	Base frame group
ACCESS	68.6% (sign.)	84.3%	78.4%	90.7% (sign.)	90%
UNIVERSAL	60.5% (sign.)	74.2%	70.5%	75.6%	76.3%
UNCONDITIONAL	34.9%	38.2%	25% (sign.)	43% (sign.)	46.3% (sign.)

Discussion and preliminary conclusion

This research offers an original contribution to the debate on the basic income policy. While most research so far has been either normative or descriptive, we conduct an empirical study of the process of opinion formation on this ambiguous debate. Considerations about the BI indeed often appear under a *veil of vagueness*, since the debate does not seem mature enough in the Belgian setting to be concretised. We took advantage of this situation and focused on how citizens could form their opinion in this constantly developing public and academic debate. For doing so, we tested the mechanism at work by means of an experiment. We presented various informative texts about the BI to a set of participants. This text varied from one group to the other: some received no text (the control group), while some received a neutral text. Other groups had to read a text with a clear argument (either unconditionality or freedom) and the last groups received a similar text including a metaphor underlying the argument. This sophisticated design allowed us to have several control groups to test the framing impact of a discourse. To study how participants were influenced by these texts, we relied on a short answer they provided to an open-ended question on the participants' definition and opinion on the BI.

So, did the framing of an informative text impact the framing of the participants' argumentative text? And if so, how? We offer a nuanced answer. Based on the literature, we highlighted some issues that could have been raised by participants as a consequence of the treatment in the experimental design. Not all codes appeared in the expected frequency in the different groups. Yet, some significant differences were uncovered among groups, which we relate to the stimulus induced in the experiment. We thus conclude that there might indeed be a framing effect of an informative text on an argumentative text.

Several considerations flow from our analysis. We present first the impact of the arguments used to test this mechanism: unconditionality and freedom. Then, we dig deeper into the impact of metaphors.

Some participants saw a text specifying that the BI should be considered as “an income that citizens receive from the State by the very fact that they are members of it”. This text suggested that no matter who you are, if you belong to the right entity, you should receive the BI. This relates to what we labelled “unconditionality”. We expected respondents from this group to activate arguments related to the conditions of the BI implementation. Our findings demonstrate that participants who read this sentence tend to indicate much more than other participants the negative political considerations that would support the fact that a BI is needed. They highlight the economic crisis or the fact that there are neglected people in our society. These participants differ from the other participant in that they tend to focus their argumentation more on the current *failure* of the Welfare State. They also specify much more who should be entitled to receive the BI - they target the citizens for most of them – what refers to the conditions of access to the BI. Although the issues of the universality of the BI and of its reciprocity (what should we *do* and not *be* in order to receive it) are not raised in statistically different proportions, the differences on the other issues still indicate that a

different pattern of argumentation is present among participants stimulated with the unconditionality argument.

Another stimulus was related to the freedom. Participants had to read the same text but with one different sentence: the basic income should in this case be seen as “an income supplied by the State so that citizens can freely live their life without having to be concerned about material constraints”. These participants were expected and indeed tend to more often report the consequences of the implementation of the BI. In particular, they raise much more the positive consequences of the BI. They also write about the quality of life and the fulfilment of the basic needs in life. However, we also predicted that their argumentative texts were likely to contain normative considerations about the highly controversial reciprocity principle and political considerations about the current socio-economical context and the challenge of BI funding. It appeared that the freedom condition did not frame the opinion formation process on these issues. On the contrary to participants who read about unconditionality, these participants raise much less the issues of the funding of the BI through taxes.

The difference between both texts in only one sentence thus created different types of argumentation among participants – although not all expected issues were raised. This demonstrates that an informative text can easily frame people’s opinion formation process. One tends to copy the arguments just read, or at least be inspired by these stances to form one’s own opinion.

Our second focus lied on the specific impact of metaphors. Are metaphors able to strengthen the effect of the argument as such? We expected metaphors to reinforce the framing impact of our argumentative conditions. The findings are nuanced and some results are even counterintuitive. The pocket money metaphor referred to the unconditionality argument. The particular pattern observed for these participants is that they tend to raise concerns about the impossibility to finance the BI. Moreover, they argue much more than other groups that the BI should concern the citizens, and the Belgian citizens specifically. This could attest for the fact that the pocket money metaphor stimulates a reasoning on both money issues that naturally flows from the concept and family issues, when they transpose the family metaphor to the Belgian State that would give pocket money to all Belgian citizens. There might thus be an influence of the metaphor as such. The springboard metaphor, on the contrary, delivered contrasted results in that arguments linked to freedom were raised to a lesser extent by participants from this group, compared to participants from the freedom group, i.e. those who received exactly the same text but with no metaphor. The fact that participants learned about a springboard effect seems to have deviated their attention from the freedom idea that was still present in the text. This was not the case for the other freedom-related metaphor, i.e. the base frame. Participants from this group tended to report much more on the opportunities offered by the BI and on freedom issues.

Despite the mixed results, we underline that a difference seems to exist between texts with and without metaphors. One should more finely assess how metaphors as discursive tools influence the way respondents apprehend the BI.

This paper took as a starting point the idea that, for a radical reform policy to be implemented, it has to be supported in the population. We draw on the concept of psychological feasibility. People's minds have to be ready to support a new policy. We thus offered to study whether the discourse used could influence how people would form their opinion. We suggest that reflecting on a political issue – the opinion formation process – constitutes the basis for making a decision. In other words, policy-makers should first aim at influencing how citizens will form their opinions before being able to change it. In this debate, we offer the recommendation that the very usage of words is extremely relevant. By testing a very light variation in a text, we already see major differences in the opinion formation of our experiment's participants. This could suggest that, when a debate is controversial and ambiguous, it could be relatively easy to frame citizens' opinion in the desired direction. One should thus pay particular attention at which arguments are put forward in the public debate, as this could profoundly modify its outcome. In particular, the usage of a metaphorical discourse might be critical.

References

- Atkinson, A. B. (1996). The case for a participation income. *The Political Quarterly*, 67(1), 67-70.
- Baker, J. (1992). An egalitarian case for basic income. In P. Van Parijs, *Arguing for Basic Income : Ethical Foundations for a Radical Reform*. London: Verso.
- Barry, B. (1996a). Surfer's Saviours ? *Citizen's Income Bulletin*(22), 2-4.
- Barry, B. (1996b). Survey Article: Real Freedom and Basic Income. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 242-276.
- Belorgey, J.-M. (. (2000). *Minima sociaux, revenus d'activité, précarité*. Commissariat général du Plan/La Documentation française.
- Blais, P. (1999). Loisir, travail et réciprocité. Une justification « rawlsienne » de l'allocation universelle est-elle possible? *Loisir et société*, 337-353.
- Blais, P. (2001). *Un revenu garanti pour tous. Introduction aux principes de l'allocation universelle*. Montréal: Boréal.
- Camerer, C. F., & Loewenstein, G. (2004). Behavioral Economics: Past, Present, Future. In C. F. Camerer, G. Loewenstein, & M. Rabin, *Advances in Behavioral Economics*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Cunliffe, J., & Erreygers, G. (2001). The Enigmatic Legacy of Charles Fourier: Joseph Charlier and Basic Income. *History of Political Economy*, 33(3), 459-484.

- De Wispelaere, J. (2015a). The Struggle for Strategy: On the Politics of the Basic Income Proposal. *Political Studies*, 36(2), 131-141.
- De Wispelaere, J. (2015b). *An Income of One's Own? The Political Analysis of Universal Basic Income*. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- De Wispelaere, J., & Noguera, J. A. (2012). On the Political Feasibility of Universal Basic Income. In K. Caputo, *Basic Income Guarantee and Politics. International Experiences and Perspectives on the Viability of Income Guarantee* (pp. 17-38). New-York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- De Wispelaere, J., & Stirton, L. (2004, July). The Many Faces of Universal Basic Income. *The Political Quarterly*, 75(3), 266-274.
- De Wispelaere, J., & Stirton, L. (2013). The Politics of Unconditional Basic Income: Bringing Bureaucracy Back In. *Political Studies*, 61, 915-932.
- Fitzpatrick, T. (1999). A Basic Income for Feminists? In T. Fitzpatrick, *Freedom and Security: An Introduction to the Basic Income Debate* (pp. 163-172). London: Macmillan.
- Fitzpatrick, T. (2009). Basic Income, Post-Productivism and Liberalism. *Basic Income Studies*, 4(2).
- Koistinen, P., & Perkiö, J. (2014). Good and Bad Times of Social Innovations: The Case of Universal Basic Income in Finland. *Basic Income Studies*, 9, 25-57.
- Liebig, S., & Mau, S. (2002). A Legitimate Guaranteed Minimum Income ? *9th BIEN Congress*. Geneva.
- Maniquet, F., & Neumann, D. (2016). L'allocation universelle : quelques éléments pour y voir plus clair. *Regards économiques*, pp. 1-14.
- Meade, J. E. (1989). *Agathotopia : The Economics of Partnership*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.
- Noguera, J. A., & De Wispelaere, J. (2006). A Plea for the Use of Laboratory Experiments in Basic Income Research. *Basic Income Studies*, 1(2).
- Offe, C. (2013). A Non-productivist Design for Social Policies. In K. Widerquist, J. A. Noguera, Y. Vandenborgh, & J. De Wispelaere, *Basic Income: An Anthology of Contemporary Research* (pp. 275-282). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Paine, T. (1796). *Agrarian justice*.

- Palmer, J. (1997). Alaska's Permanent Fund. Remarkable Success at Age 20... but what now? *The Juneau Report*.
- Parker, H. (1991). *Basic Income and the Labour Market*. London: Basic Income Research Group.
- Perkiö, J. (2012). The Struggle over Interpretation: Basic Income in the Finnish Public Discussion in 2006-2012. *14th BIEN Congress*. Munich.
- Perrez, J., & Reuchamps, M. (2015a). Special Issue on the Political Impact of Metaphors. *Metaphors and the Social World*, 5(2), 165-176.
- Rawls, J. (2009). *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press.
- Standing, G. (2002). *Beyond the New Paternalism. Basic Security as Equality*. London: Verso.
- Steiner, H. (1992). Three Just Taxes. In P. Van Parijs, *Arguing for Basic Income: Ethical Foundations for a Radical Reform* (pp. 81-92). London: Verso.
- Tobin, J. (1965). On Improving the Economic Status of the Negro. *Daedalus*, 94(4), pp. 878-898.
- van der Veen, R. (1998). Real Freedom versus Reciprocity: Competing Views on the Justice of Unconditional Basic Income. *Political Studies*, 140-163.
- Van der Veen, R. J., & Van Parijs, P. (1986, Septembre). A Capitalist Road to Communism. *Theory and Society*, 15(5), pp. 635-655.
- Van Parijs, P. (1991). Why Surfers Should be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 20(2), 101-131.
- Van Parijs, P. (1998). *Real Freedom for All: What (if anything) can justify capitalism?* Oxford University Press.
- Van Parijs, P. (2006). Basic Income : A simple and powerful idea for the 21st century. In B. Ackerman, A. Alstott, P. Van Parijs, & E. O. Wright, *Redesigning Distribution: basic income and stakeholder grants as alternative cornerstones for a more egalitarian capitalism* (Vol. V, pp. 4-39). London: Verso.
- Van Parijs, P., & Vandenberght, Y. (2001). From Euro-Stipendium to Euro-Dividend. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 11(4), 342-346.
- Van Parijs, P., & Vandenberght, Y. (2005). *L'Allocation Universelle*. Paris: La Découverte.

- Vandenborgh, Y. (2004). *The Political Feasibility of an Unconditional Minimum Income : A Comparative Analysis of political Debates on a Basic Income, a Negative Income Tax, and a Participation Income in five OECD countries (1970-2003)*. Louvain-La-Neuve.
- Widerquist, K., Vandenborgh, Y., Noguera, J. A., & De Wispelaere, J. (2013). The Idea of an Unconditional Income for Everyone. In K. Widerquist, Y. Vandenborgh, J. A. Noguera, & J. De Wispelaere, *Basic Income: An Anthology of Contemporary Research* (pp. xi-xxi). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.