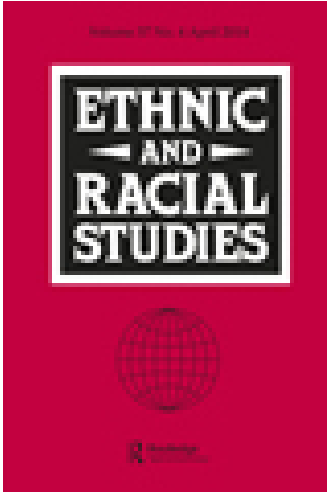


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The effect of perceived cultural and material threats on ethnic preferences in immigration attitudes

Pazit Ben-Nun Bloom, Gizem Arikan and Gallya Lahav

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This paper shows that cultural and material threats exist side by side, serving different psychological functions, and that they manifest in differential attitudes towards immigrants from different ethnic or racial origins. While culturally threatened individuals prefer immigrants akin to themselves, as opposed to those from different races and cultures, the materially threatened prefer immigrants who are different from themselves who can be expected not to compete for the same resources. We test our hypotheses using multilevel structural equation modelling, based on data from twenty countries in the 2002 wave of the European Social Survey. The disaggregation of these two types of perceived threat reveals responsiveness to the race of immigrants that is otherwise masked by pooling the two threat dimensions.

Keywords: perceived threat; immigration; comparative politics; multilevel structural equation modelling; ethnic preferences; responsiveness to group cues

The 2014 Swiss vote to retreat from free movement agreements with the European Union sent shockwaves across the EU. It has been suggested that highly skilled, foreign professionals from other European countries would be the most affected by the outcome, rather than the ethnically or religiously dissimilar (Foulkes 2014). If opposition to immigration is not necessarily the exclusive domain of knee-jerk reactions to non-white, non-Christian, Third World immigrants, what, then, governs individuals' preferences for the type of immigrants that should be allowed into a country?

The vast literature studying opposition to immigration centres on the material and cultural threats posed by immigrants (Citrin et al. 1997; Stephan et al. 1998; Fetzer 2000; Wilson 2001; Rajzman and Semyonov 2004; McLaren and Johnson 2007; Rustenbach 2010; Lahav and Courtemanche 2012). As an explanation of mass attitudes towards immigration, perceived cultural threat is typically claimed to outperform material threat (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; McLaren and Johnson 2007; Sides and Citrin 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010). Still, other recent studies suggest that opposition to immigration could also arise when natives are in direct competition with immigrants for material resources (Dancygier 2010; Gorodzeisky 2011; Malhotra, Margalit, and Mo 2013).

This paper argues that cultural and material threats exist side by side, are driven by different factors and serve different psychological functions. Whereas recent works have compared the effects of the two threats (e.g. Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior, 2004; Raijman 2010; Gorodzeisky 2013), these studies are typically country-specific, do not account for multiple countries and immigration contexts, and the results have not been extended to immigration attitudes in Europe. Moreover, although there is wide agreement that opposition to immigration may be responsive to the ethnicity, source country and work skills of immigrants, the extant literature typically does not consider the potential political consequences of individual-level differences in the type of perceived threat – material versus cultural (but see Raijman 2010; Gorodzeisky, 2011, 2013; also see Blinder, 2014 for the British case).

Our study contributes to the literature by theoretically and empirically disentangling the differential effects of material and cultural threats on immigration attitudes using data from a large sample of European countries. Further, we posit that the two types of threat have different consequences for immigration attitudes, as they exert distinct influences on preferences for the type of immigrants that should be allowed into a country. Those who are more culturally threatened prefer to admit people like themselves, in order to minimize the cultural, racial and religious heterogeneity of their environment, while the more materially threatened prefer people different from themselves, who can be expected not to compete for the same resources. Thus, failure to empirically identify the multidimensional nature of threat may obscure the differential effects of different kinds of threat on discrimination in immigrant preferences. We empirically confirm these expectations regarding the political consequences of individual-level cultural versus material perceived threats, and find cultural threat to be a stronger predictor of ethnic-based discrimination against immigrants, in line with recent studies (Sides and Citrin 2007; Oesch 2008; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010).

Our results can help explain over-time and cross-context differences in the contribution of material considerations to immigration attitudes, as the balance between cultural and material considerations within one's psyche may be sensitive to environmental changes and external cues. Further, linkages between the two types of immigration threat can be exploited by politicians and parties in order to cue distinct political debates and preferences (Lahav and Courtemanche 2012).

Theoretical framework: material and cultural threats from immigration

Assuming that perceived threat is an antecedent of exclusionary attitudes towards immigrants and immigration policies (Stephan et al. 1998; Fetzer 2000; Wilson 2001; McLaren and Johnson 2007; Scheibner and Morrison 2009), two paradigms of threat broadly lend themselves to attitudinal variations. Grounded in realistic conflict theory, the concept of material threat posits that individuals are primarily concerned with their own and their group's welfare (Bobo 1988). Minority group members, or immigrants, may be seen as potential competitors over material resources, and increasing immigrant populations create a threat as they compete for scarce material resources (Blalock 1967; Hoskin 1991; Olzak 1992; Quillian 1995; Fetzer 2000; Scheepers, Gijssberts, and Coenders 2002; Wilkes, Guppy, and Farris 2008; Dancygier 2010; Gorodzeisky 2011; Malhotra, Margalit, and Mo 2013). The perception of such

competitive threat from immigrants might be influenced by macro-level socio-economic conditions (such as the state of the economy, or the size of the immigrant population) as well as micro-level factors, such as the skill level of individuals, who might be competing with the immigrants for the same jobs (Semyonov, Rajjman, and Gorodzeisky 2006). Thus, this perspective at least partly explains the opposition of individuals with particular skills to immigrants possessing those skills (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; Mayda 2006; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2006; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010).

In contrast to the fear of losing access to tangible resources, perceived *cultural* threat refers to people's fear of risking the positive status of the country's symbolic establishments as well as its ethnic and cultural cohesiveness due to increases in populations of differing race, language, norms and values. This conceptualization is grounded in social identity theory, which posits that attachment to in-groups is a readily available source of self-esteem (Tajfel 1981), and therefore that threats to the maintenance of individuals' values, culture, cohesiveness and positive distinctiveness posed by immigrants are what account for anti-immigration attitudes (Fetzer 2000; Gibson 2002; McLaren 2002; Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002; Lahav 2004; Lewis 2005; Sides and Citrin 2007; Davidov et al. 2008; Arikan and Ben-Nun Bloom 2013).

Individuals differ in the level of perceived material versus cultural threat that they experience at a given time since different personal and contextual factors are responsible for the types of threat perceived. The two dimensions of threat also serve different psychological functions. The functional perspective on individual attitudes posits that they serve a host of psychological needs (Katz 1960). The articulation of perceived material threat serves a utilitarian or instrumental function, related to the motivations of group- or self-preservation and self-interest. In contrast, cultural threat is 'value-expressive'; it satisfies a need to express one's values and self-concept, as it helps protect one's self-image by maintaining a positive distinct group identity (Tajfel 1981).

While stemming from different psychological motivations, two types of threat are shown to be positively related (Gorodzeisky 2013). First, some groups of immigrants may appear threatening in both ways. Second, even if a group of immigrants is negatively evaluated on the basis of one type of threat, motivated reasoning can recruit other possible justifications for the negative opinion (Taber and Lodge 2006), and an additional source of threat would be highly accessible in this process. Material threat may occur for some of the individuals only some of the time (Dancygier and Donnelly 2013; Malhotra, Margalit, and Mo 2013), whereas cultural threat is more enduring and prevalent (Huddy and Sears 1995). As a result, the differential effects of the two threat dimensions are masked when pooled, typically yielding an overall greater effect for the latter in most analyses (Burns and Gimpel 2000; McLaren and Johnson 2007; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010).

Both types of threat are expected to emerge across various national and political settings (Pantoja 2006). Thus, cultural threat can be expected, even where immigrants mainly pose a material threat, and material threat is likely to be invoked even when the core concern is cultural. Still, the fact that these threats stem from different psychological functions suggests that they may correspond to different consequences.

We argue below that different types of perceived threats shape divergent attitudes to distinct aspects of migration policies, manifested in responsiveness to different group cues.

Analytical framework: responsiveness of immigration attitudes to group cues

The well-documented centrality of group cues in political attitude formation (Sears and Funk 1991; Nelson and Kinder 1996; Mendelberg 2001) is applicable to our understanding of immigration attitudes. At the aggregate level, distinct attitudinal patterns are discernible towards groups of immigrants, based on race or ethnicity (Tolbert and Hero 1996; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008), issue linkage (Lahav 2004; McAdams, Sokhey, and Weisberg 2008), stock (McLaren 2002; Snellman and Ekehammar 2005; Strabac and Listhaug 2008), religion (Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan, and Courtemanche, 2015) and country of origin (Raijman 2010; Gorodzeisky 2011). Despite the otherwise extensive comparative literature on immigration attitudes, the underlying factors driving the responsiveness of immigration attitudes to group cues have largely remained country-specific and have focused on one type of threat or one type of immigrant group.

The rich empirical research has been inconclusive with regard to sources of individual affinities for several reasons. First, studies of the effects of group cues on immigration attitudes tend to focus on the effects of framing one specific group in different ways (McAdams, Sokhey, and Weisberg 2008). Second, research studying more than one immigrant group typically involves a single political context, generally finding that opposition to immigration substantially differs across groups of immigrants in predictable ways (Duckitt 1992; Hagendoorn 1995; Lahav 2004). A prominent example is the greater opposition of Europeans to Muslim as compared to European immigrants (Fetzer and Soper 2005; Strabac and Listhaug 2008). Similarly, a higher degree of discrimination against non-European as compared to European immigrants was found in Sweden (Snellman and Ekehammar 2005). In the USA, Brader, Valentino, and Suhay (2008) found that negative ads presenting a Latino immigrant boosted feelings of anxiety among white Americans compared to negative ads presenting a Russian immigrant. Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) experimentally studied the responsiveness of Americans to the work skills of immigrants and found little evidence for the material threat thesis. Still, a systematic examination of the sources of attitudes towards different immigrant groups has rarely been undertaken in a comparative setting. Despite exceptional cross-national investigations of multiple immigrant groups, there remains a predilection for considering country-level variations in exclusionary attitudes over their individual-level predictors, or addressing the effect of only one type of threat on discrimination against immigrants (Facchini and Mayda 2009; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2009).

These shortcomings belie the fact that rankings of groups, based on ethnicity, gender or economic status, often hold above and beyond specific national, political and social contexts (Duckitt 1992; Hagendoorn 1995; Hagendoorn et al. 1998). They also do not consider the substantial variation among individuals in preferences for one group over another. In fact, what explains *individual* differences in objections to one immigrant group over another remains unclear.

We suggest that material and cultural threats are both key to explaining preferences for some groups of immigrants over others. Corroborating the few studies that pit material and cultural threats against each other (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; Dustmann and Preston 2007), we agree that concern with skill levels or competition may generate ethnic stereotypes (Scheve and Slaughter 2001) or opposition to immigration (Jackson and Esses 2000). Still, we maintain that such studies are limited in their ability to allow for direct comparison, because they take place in different political, cultural and economic contexts, and differ in their definition and measurement of responsiveness to ethnic cues as well as threat perceptions. In addition, while these studies provide evidence concerning the responsiveness of immigration attitudes to ethnic cues and threat perception, they do not explain possible individual differences in preferences for some groups over others. More often than not, research either presents a comparison between two groups of immigrants (e.g. European versus non-European), or studies individual differences in immigration attitudes. Therefore, we strive to connect the two in a cross-country setting.

Hypotheses: the effect of threat on ethnic preferences in immigration attitudes

Given the different psychological functions that perceived material and cultural threats fulfil, the two can be thought to have different effects on individual preferences regarding the type of immigrants admitted to the country. Grounded in concerns of self-interest, material threat is associated with negative attitudes towards a specific group of immigrants to the extent that they are perceived as consuming resources and increasing competition over scarce resources (Dancygier 2010; Gorodzeisky 2011; Malhotra, Margalit, and Mo 2013). Therefore, we expect materially threatened individuals to prefer racially or ethnically different immigrants, who are perceived as unskilled and less economically competitive, over groups of immigrants more likely to compete for jobs and resources. For example, non-Europeans and racially different immigrants, who are often perceived as possessing fewer skills than white European immigrants, may be preferred when material interests are threatened.

In contrast, perceived cultural threat stems from the challenge of maintaining a distinct positive group identity. Since the presence of ethnically or racially different immigrants is expected to bring to bear more external pressure on identity, cultural threat is expected to induce negative attitudes towards ethnically or racially different groups. Thus, the mechanisms that lead to the rejection of some Eastern European immigrants, for example, may differ from those involved in hostility to Muslim or African migrants. With some exceptions (see Bleich 2009), native opposition to certain groups varies according to the difference between immigrants' culture and that of the dominant ethnic group in the host country (Fetzer 2000). Furthermore, religion and culture have become the primary focuses of the boundary-work literature, given the fear of being labelled a racist (Bail 2008; see also Zolberg and Woon 1999; Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan, and Courtemanche, 2015). Studies suggest that interviewees in surveys often shift the discussion from 'old racism', entailing biological racial differences, to culture and religion, focusing on the incompatibility of lifestyles and traditions, since 'culture served as a more socially acceptable rendering of racial

difference than biology could alone' (Morning 2009, 1176) – a phenomenon that has been called 'racism without races' (Balibar 1991). Thus, we refer here to ethno-racial and religious differences as proxies for cultural threat.

We therefore hypothesize that perceived cultural threat is likely to increase resistance to open door policies for immigrants from different races or ethnic groups (H_1), and perceived material threat to increase opposition to policies allowing immigrants with skills similar to those prevalent in the country (H_2). As far as European countries are concerned, strong cultural threat should increase opposition to large immigration quotas for racially different and non-EU immigrants, while material threat should increase opposition to the immigration of racially similar or EU immigrants.

In addition, economically based arguments suggest that individuals develop unfavourable attitudes towards immigrants when in competition with foreigners over resources. Individuals with low socio-economic status or low skill levels may feel more competition from immigrants who are racially or ethnically different or non-European, who generally tend to be low-skilled labourers (Jackson et al. 2001; Kehrberg 2007; Coenders, Lubbers, and Scheepers 2008; Schneider 2008; Gorodzeisky and Semyonov 2009). Thus, we hypothesize an interaction effect between perceived material threat and economic well-being at the individual level, such that material threat boosts opposition to allowing immigrants with similar skills to enter the country, especially among those low in economic well-being and the unemployed (H_3).

Data, measures and the model

Data

The data were drawn from the 2002 European Social Survey (ESS), which includes an immigration module and covers twenty-two countries. All respondents reporting themselves foreign-born were excluded from the analysis, as well as two countries – France and Israel.¹ As a result, the full structural equation models include data from twenty European countries.²

Measures

The variables used in the analysis, as well as their summary statistics, are shown in [Table S1](#) in the Supplementary Data file. However, both the dependent variables and key independent variables require some discussion.

Dependent variables (ethnic preferences in immigration attitudes)

In order to measure preferences for which a specific type of immigrant should be allowed entrance into a respondent's country, three measures were constructed: (1) preference for same race immigrants; (2) preference for EU immigrants from poor countries; (3) preference for EU immigrants from rich countries. To create each measure, we took the difference between two versions of the same question (based on immigrant ethnicity or stock). For instance, responses to the question, 'to what extent

do you think [country] should allow people of the *same race or ethnic group* as most [country] people to come and live here?’ were subtracted from responses to the same question about people of a *different race or ethnic group*. Both original questions are measured on a four-point Likert scale, so the subtraction produces a measure that ranges from -3 to 3, with higher numbers representing greater racial discrimination. For convenience, the new measure is recoded to vary from 1 to 7, where 7 indicates greater racial discrimination (i.e. supporting same-race immigration but not different-race immigration); 4 means that the respondent gave the same response towards both kinds of immigrants; and 1 indicates that the respondent favours different-race immigration but not same-race immigration (i.e. answered ‘allow many different races to come’ or ‘allow none of the same race’). Taking the difference between the two versions of the question resembles a within-subjects experiment, where the participant is subjected to every single treatment, and in this case to both possible cues: same race and different race. This design allows an assessment of the unique contribution of the type of immigrant to the immigration attitude.

While the variance in such measures is arguably limited due to social desirability effects (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007), they still yield some variance. The mode in all three measures was the middle point of no ethnic preference for either side, that is, opposing different- and same-race immigrants to the same extent (quotas: 75.1%; poor: 86.7%; rich: 82.8%). The second most common preference was an opposition to different-race more than same-race immigrants (quotas: 22.3%; poor: 9.9%; rich: 12.5%), while fewer respondents were opposed to same-race more than different-race immigrants (quotas: 2.6%; poor: 3.4%; rich: 4.7%).

Perceived material and cultural threat

As shown in Supplementary Table S1, five questions were chosen to represent material threat and three to assess cultural threat. We modelled the two types of threat as two latent variables.³ Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the threat items, and to test the hypothesized bi-dimensionality of the perceived threat. The fit indices for the hypothesized bi-dimensional model are well above the acceptable threshold (CFI = .988, TLI = .977, RMSEA = .040) and superior to the model that specifies a single latent threat factor, providing support for the two-dimensional conceptualization of perceived threat.

Antecedents of threat and discrimination towards immigrants

We specified individual-level factors such as skill level or unemployment experience, economic well-being and evaluations of the economy, as well as other personal background characteristics (age, gender, parenthood, ideology, etc.) that might affect responsiveness to group cues both directly and via threat perceptions (for more information, see Supplementary Table S1).

Method

We used multilevel structural equation modelling to test the hypotheses. Since our aim is not to explain between-country variation in responsiveness to group cues, we

did not separately estimate a between-cluster model; instead, we specified a random-intercept model in which the random intercepts mostly capture differences in the factor indicators in the cluster level (see Muthén, Khoo, and Gustafsson 1997). Still, to further test the robustness of our results in the face of differential item functioning, we also used a multiple-group structural equation modelling (MG-SEM) approach.⁴ Mplus software was used to run all the models.⁵

Results

Table 1 shows the results of three multilevel structural equation models. Model I specifies the measurement model only for perceived threat factors, which, in turn, predict the three ethnic preferences measures, without adding any exogenous variables that predict threat or ethnic preferences. Since it could be argued that individual-level factors work through perceived material and cultural threats to affect ethnic and racial preferences in attitudes towards immigrants (Scheepers, Gijsberts, and Coenders 2002), Model II tests the effect of perceived threat on ethnic preferences in immigration attitudes when regressed on a range of demographic, socio-economic and some behavioural factors, including unemployment history, satisfaction with present income, economic situation and health services in the country, feelings of safety, perceived immigration scope, trust in people, age, gender, ideology, religious education and being a parent. This model tests the alternative hypothesis of a spurious effect of the two types of threat on ethnic preferences, without specifying direct links between these exogenous variables and the dependent variables. Model III adds direct links from each of the exogenous variables to the dependent variables, to test for potential direct effects of the control variables on ethnic preferences in immigration attitudes.

Notably, all models reveal fit statistics that are well above acceptable levels. In all the models, the effect of cultural threat on all ethnic/racial preference measures is positive and statistically significant. That is, culturally threatened people tend to prefer allowing immigrants who are racially or ethnically like them, and are more supportive of allowing Europeans than non-Europeans into their country, regardless of whether they come from poorer or richer countries. This finding therefore provides robust evidence in favour of a strong effect of perceived cultural threat on ethnic preference in attitudes towards immigrants (H_1).

The results also provide support for the hypothesis that perceived material threat is correlated with a preference for other-race immigrants in immigration policy (H_2). In all three models, the effect of material threat on ethnic preferences in immigration policy is negative and statistically significant. The results suggest that material threat is correlated with the rejection of immigrants of the same race or ethnicity and with a preference for allowing in more immigrants from different races and ethnicities. Similarly, the effect of perceived material threat on preference for Europeans is negative and statistically significant for immigrants coming from both poorer and richer countries. That is, as far as the European publics are concerned, individuals who attribute a perceived threat to their economic well-being to immigration tend to prefer non-Europeans as immigrants, possibly because non-EU citizens are perceived as being less likely to compete with Europeans for jobs. Interestingly, material threat

Table 1. Threat and ethnic preferences in immigration attitudes: multilevel SEM.

	Model I			Model II			Model III					
	Same race	EU poor	EU rich	Same race	EU poor	EU rich	Same race	EU poor	EU rich			
Cultural threat	.202 (.028)	.058 (.014)	.081 (.014)	.246 (.038)	.065 (.015)	.100 (.021)	.233 (.036)	.064 (.016)	.093 (.019)			
Material threat	-.061 (.023)	-.035 (.015)	-.036 (.017)	-.109 (.034)	-.048 (.020)	-.061 (.024)	-.075 (.030)	-.037 (.019)	-.037 (.021)			
Satisfied country economy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.004 (.033)	.002 (.002)	.001 (.002)			
Satisfied country health services	-	-	-	-	-	-	.000 (.002)	.001 (.001)	.002 (.002)			
Satisfied income	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.019 (.004)	.001 (.004)	-.002 (.005)			
Unemployment	-	-	-	-	-	-	.002 (.005)	.007 (.003)	-.003 (.005)			
Feeling unsafe	-	-	-	-	-	-	.001 (.005)	.002 (.004)	-.004 (.005)			
Perceived immigration scope	-	-	-	-	-	-	.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)	.000 (.000)			
Trust in people	-	-	-	-	-	-	.004 (.003)	.003 (.001)	.002 (.002)			
Political right	-	-	-	-	-	-	.010 (.003)	.001 (.001)	.001 (.002)			
Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	.007 (.002)	.002 (.001)	.004 (.001)			
Age	-	-	-	-	-	-	.001 (.000)	.000 (.000)	.001 (.000)			
Religiosity	-	-	-	-	-	-	.002 (.002)	.001 (.001)	-.001 (.002)			
Gender	-	-	-	-	-	-	.037 (.009)	.012 (.005)	.017 (.007)			
Parent	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.011 (.007)	-.002 (.004)	.007 (.006)			
Predictors of threat	Cultural		Material		Cultural		Material		Cultural		Material	
Satisfied country economy	-	-	-	-	-.013 (.006)	-.025 (.004)	-	-	-.012 (.007)	-	-.026 (.004)	
Satisfied country health services	-	-	-	-	-.009 (.007)	-.016 (.005)	-	-	-.009 (.007)	-	-.016 (.005)	
Satisfied income	-	-	-	-	.072 (.020)	.069 (.018)	-	-	.074 (.021)	-	.068 (.018)	
Unemployment	-	-	-	-	.009 (.011)	.013 (.008)	-	-	.009 (.012)	-	.014 (.008)	
Feeling unsafe	-	-	-	-	.052 (.017)	.041 (.011)	-	-	.052 (.018)	-	.041 (.011)	

Table 1 (Continued)

Predictors of threat	Cultural	Material	Cultural	Material	Cultural	Material
Perceived immigration scope	-	-	.002 (.001)	.002 (.001)	.002 (.001)	.002 (.001)
Trust in people	-	-	-.077 (.010)	-.062 (.011)	-.077 (.009)	-.062 (.011)
Political right	-	-	.063 (.007)	.034 (.005)	.062 (.007)	.034 (.005)
Education	-	-	-.043 (.004)	-.023 (.004)	-.044 (.005)	-.023 (.004)
Age	-	-	.005 (.001)	.001 (.000)	.005 (.001)	.001 (.000)
Religiosity	-	-	.006 (.009)	-.002 (.007)	.005 (.009)	-.002 (.007)
Gender	-	-	.091 (.017)	.003 (.012)	.083 (.017)	.004 (.012)
Parent	-	-	.008 (.014)	.009 (.011)	.010 (.014)	.009 (.010)
f1/f2 correlation	.232 (.035)		.167 (.017)		.166 (.017)	
N/n	28,550/21		21,492/20		21,492/20	
CFI/TLI/RMSEA	.998/.998/.018		.946/.929/.019		.955/.921/.020	

Note: Coefficients are unstandardized weighted-least-squares estimates, with standard errors in brackets. Factor loadings for threat items are available from authors. Bold entries indicate two-tail $p < .05$ and italic entries indicate two-tail $p < .1$.

is associated with a preference for more immigration from non-EU countries, regardless of whether the immigrants are rich or poor. That is, when it comes to non-Europeans, the respondents do not seem to distinguish between richer and poorer immigrants, who are likely to have different education and skill levels.⁶

Next, we investigate whether the effect of material threat is contingent on personal economic circumstances, such that material threat may be related to greater preference for different-race immigrants when the socio-economic status of the respondent is low (H_3). It is also possible that material threat has a stronger correlation with attitudes towards different-race immigrants when individuals perceive their country's economic situation as unfavourable. To test these hypotheses, we reran the models after specifying interactions between material threat and experience of unemployment; material threat and years of education; material threat and concerns about household income; material threat and satisfaction with the economy; material threat and satisfaction with health services. In none of the models did we find a robust and statistically significant interaction effect between material threat and economic well-being variables. These null findings are in line with some recent empirical evidence that also fails to establish any conditioning effect of personal or national economic circumstances on material threat and immigration attitudes (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010).

Comparing the fit statistics of Models II and III, it seems that demographic, socio-economic and behavioural factors mostly affect ethnic preferences in immigration attitudes through threat perceptions. The results of Models II and III also show that cultural threat is better explained than is material threat by stable, enduring personal characteristics (as suggested by Huddy and Sears 1995), such as ideology, education, age and gender, as indicated by the stronger coefficients of these variables with respect to cultural threat. In contrast, and as can be expected, material threat is better explained by situational variables, such as satisfaction with the country's economy and health services, as well as the respondent's history of unemployment. Feelings of unsafety and perceived migration scope also have robust effects on both types of threat perception, while interpersonal trust significantly decreases both material and cultural threat.

Whereas Model II only specifies the indirect effects of the exogeneous variables on immigration attitudes via threat perceptions, Model III adds direct links from the exogeneous variables to immigration attitudes. While the direct effects of certain variables such as gender and education are quite robust, the effects of variables such as personal economic circumstances and ideology differ. Still, the direct links from the independent to dependent variables should not be evaluated in isolation from the indirect and total effects. Thus, for example, while the direct effect of education on all three dependent variables tapping racial discrimination is positive, its indirect effect via material threat perception is negative and statistically significant as expected, and its total effect on the outcome variables is statistically insignificant. Similarly, while the direct effect of interpersonal trust is in the unexpected direction, its indirect effects via perceived threat as well as the total effects are in the hypothesized, negative direction. Next, personal economic circumstances and sociotropic evaluations do not have statistically significant direct effects on discrimination for immigration policy items.

While their effects on material threat perceptions are usually negative and statistically different from zero, their indirect and total effects are typically insignificant.

Robust analysis

First, we were interested in examining the extent to which the effects of cultural and material threats on ethnic preferences in immigration attitudes hold across different political and social contexts. This was investigated in a multiple-group structural equation model that obtained results for each of the twenty countries separately.

Multiple-group models mostly support the findings of the multilevel analysis (see Supplementary Table S2). The positive and significant effect of cultural threat on preference for same-race immigrants was replicated. In all twenty countries in the data set, cultural threat is positively correlated with preference for an immigration policy that would discriminate against immigrants from different races and ethnicities, and fourteen of these coefficients are statistically significant. The positive effect of cultural threat on discriminating attitudes towards non-EU immigrants is also mostly replicated. In sixteen out of twenty countries, the coefficient for the effect of cultural threat on discrimination against non-EU immigrants from poorer countries lies in the expected direction, and it reaches statistical significance in nine of these models. Similarly, in seventeen models, cultural threat perception boosts discrimination against non-EU migrants from richer countries, and this effect is statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level in ten of these cases.

The coefficient of the effect of material threat on a preference for different-race rather than same-race immigration lies in the expected direction for sixteen of twenty countries; of these, results are statistically significant for nine. In fourteen and thirteen out of twenty cases, we find support for the argument that material threat is correlated with preference for discrimination in favour of immigrants from poorer and richer non-EU countries, respectively, but only seven and five of these coefficients achieve statistical significance. Overall, perceived material threat seems to have a more consistent effect on preference for different-race immigration, compared to preference for non-EU immigration. Still, the MG-SEM results suggest that the relative effects of the two types of threat are possibly context-dependent. Future studies might investigate the conditions in which one is stronger than the other in affecting preference as to immigrants' ethnicity.

Next, we were also interested in examining the results of a pooled structural equation model, which does not take into account the between-level heterogeneity of the observations. The fit of this model was above acceptable thresholds, although, as expected, it had poorer fit compared to the multilevel SEM (CFI = .935, TLI = .915, RMSEA = .032). Results from the pooled model fully replicated results of the multilevel Model II for the effects of the two dimensions of threat on ethnic preferences, with cultural threat related to a same-race preference, and material threat related to other-race preference, for all three dependent variables.

We also wanted to test the consequences of pooling together the two dimensions of threat when explaining ethnic preferences. The models in which threat items represent one latent dimension have poorer fit when compared to Models I, II and III. Because cultural threat has a larger coefficient than material threat, the effect of the pooled

threat factor on the dependent variables is typically positive and statistically significant. Thus, the different consequences of the two threats justify disentangling them in future research, as pooling them masks their differential effects.⁷

Conclusions

This study has attempted to add to the burgeoning literature on attitudes towards immigration by showing the differential effects of different types of perceived threat on ethnic preferences in immigration policy in the European context. By conducting a cross-country comparison of individuals from two dozen countries, we aimed to maximize the generalizability of the results regarding the role of distinct threats on responsiveness to immigrant characteristics. This is possible neither with single-country studies nor with aggregate data alone.

Our findings reveal that individuals differentiate between types of immigrants, such that preferences concerning immigration policy are affected by who the immigrants are and where they come from. Importantly, we show that different dimensions of perceived threat – material and cultural – are key to explaining what types of immigrants citizens of European publics prefer. Threat to group values and identity leads individuals to prefer allowing in people more like themselves. In contrast, those who perceive a threat to tangible individual and group interests prefer immigration policies that favour immigrants from different ethnic, racial or geographical backgrounds, who are less likely to compete with them for resources.

Disentangling the different consequences of the two threats has important theoretical, methodological and empirical implications. In contrast to most economic models (e.g. Scheve and Slaughter 2001), our findings suggest that skill level, personal economic circumstances and evaluations of the state of the national economy are not directly linked to discrimination towards certain types of immigrant in a country, and that these factors mostly work through increasing threat perceptions. In addition, we find no evidence that material hardship or concerns about the economy's well-being strengthens the effect of material threat on discrimination items. These findings give more credence to those studies that do not find interaction effects between personal circumstances and situational factors such as the type of immigrant (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010).

The distinction between perceived material and cultural threats posed by immigration carries important political consequences. In the context of a multicultural Europe, issues of discrimination and resistance to immigration are multidimensional. Political discourse is likely to shift with different threat triggers, and therefore, to lend itself substantially to political persuasion and framing. Just as media can prime specific public moods, politicians can readily socialize or appeal to their public constituencies through threat heuristics. Those who are materially threatened will be more likely to feel jeopardized by specific immigrant groups. Thus, politicians who speak of employer sanctions rather than multiculturalism have to alter their messages if they are referring to economically competitive, more culturally akin, Eastern European 'new' 'citizens' or non-white, non-Christian Third World nationals. While a melting-pot approach may attenuate threats resulting from cultural diversity, incremental actions by European governments to punish illegal foreign labour may

alleviate the threat induced by utilitarian motives, especially in egalitarian and social democratic countries. It behoves politicians to know their audience: those who seek to mobilize their constituents around labour market reforms need to be sure that they are not responding to intractable adherents of European secularism. Successful politicians need to offer programmes commensurate with their public constituencies.

It would be worthwhile to consider in future research whether political mobilization and persuasion attempts are more successful when cast in terms of the proper attitude functions (as in Katz 1960) of different individuals and strata within the population. Since anti-immigration political campaigns often employ group cues, and even overtly differentiate between different groups of immigrants, it is important to study the individual differences that affect the success of such rhetoric. Future research can valuably disaggregate other threats that are increasingly linked to migration, including public health and welfare (Sainsbury 2012), religious threat (Ben-Nun Bloom, Arikan, and Courtemanche, 2015), and crime and security (Fitzgerald, Curtis, and Corliss 2012; Lahav and Courtemanche 2012).

Finally, these substantive distinctions justify our methodological exercise. Since the positive effect of cultural threat is stronger than the negative effect of material threat, pooling the two yields a positive coefficient and makes it impossible to assess the distinct negative effect of material threat. Furthermore, while a great deal of literature has been devoted to comparisons of the predictive power of economic and cultural threats, the two are often offered as alternative explanations, and the definitions and measurements associated with the terms vary vastly between studies. Acknowledging the multifaceted nature of perceived threats associated with immigration motivated by distinct attitude functions opens the door to a new phase in this literature, in which the psychological underpinning of reactions to immigration is more nuanced, and can be better assessed. Further studies addressing the nature of perceived threat as a consequence of its psychological functions are thus both academically valuable and politically warranted in the face of an ever-diversifying but faltering EU.

Supplemental data

See <http://pluto.mscc.huji.ac.il/~pazit/> for supplemental data.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes

1. France was omitted from a number of models due to missing items, and we omitted Israel due to serious bias in threat items and due to a debate regarding whether or not it is a European country.
2. For details on the design and sampling, see: <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>.
3. We added correlated errors between items 6 and 7, 1 and 6, 1 and 8, and 1 and 2. Furthermore, we tested for the cross-national equivalence of threat items by employing multiple-group CFA (see Supplementary Data B for more details).

4. MG-SEM extends the single-group SEM by simultaneously estimating the model across different samples, allowing the researcher to control for differential item functioning.
5. Mplus provides maximum-likelihood estimation under missing data theory.
6. Although the ESS does not include variables that allow for direct measurement of the perceived education and skill levels of migrants, the finding that material threat leads individuals to prefer non-EU citizens regardless of whether they come from rich or poor countries is suggestive of this conclusion.
7. To test the robustness of our models, we reran the analyses using only exogenous variables. Next, we ran a number of alternative path models in which we altered the specification of the models and the measurement of the threat factors. Results were overall robust to the altered specification (see Supplementary Data B for details).

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