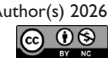
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Cultural solidarity, economic threat: How discrimination influences anti-immigrant attitudes

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Abstract

Studies on the attitudes of minorities toward immigrants have produced mixed results, as while some suggest that minorities are more tolerant of immigrants, others find minorities resemble majority groups in their attitudes. We argue these inconsistencies stem from differences in how people evaluate immigrants' cultural and economic impacts. Using data from the International Social Survey Programme linked with group-level measures of political, economic, religious, and linguistic discrimination from the Minorities at Risk and Ethnic Power Relations datasets, we examine how minority and majority groups assess immigration across economic and cultural dimensions. We find that minority group members are significantly less likely than majority group members to view immigrants as a cultural threat, yet they express similar levels of concern about the economic impacts of immigration. This suggests that minority groups may feel a sense of solidarity with immigrants based on shared experiences of discrimination, which reduces perceptions of immigrants as a cultural threat, even as their concerns about economic competition remain similar to those of majority groups. We conclude that anti-immigrant sentiment is multidimensional, which helps clarify how social position shapes attitudes.

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anti-immigrant attitudes, group threat, intergroup solidarity, discrimination, minority groups

Introduction

Recent political developments around the world illustrate a puzzling pattern in minority group attitudes toward immigration. Despite the explicitly xenophobic rhetoric of many anti-immigrant politicians and movements, minority groups have at times supported restrictive immigration agendas, including support for Donald Trump among Latino voters in the US elections (Corral and Leal, 2020; Sommer and Franco, 2024), Germany's far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) among Russian–German voters (Spies et al., 2022), or Brexit among Asian voters (Joppke, 2020). Yet existing research often associates minority status with more positive immigration attitudes through their shared experiences of discrimination and marginalization (e.g. Abdelhadi and O'Brien, 2020; Just and Anderson, 2015). Why, then, do minority group members show opposition to immigration in some contexts while expressing more favorable views in others?

Group threat theory is the central sociological theory for explaining anti-immigrant sentiment. It argues that people develop anti-immigrant prejudice because they consider immigrants threats to their own group's status (Blumer, 1958; Quillian, 1995; Scheepers et al., 2002; Schlueter and Scheepers, 2010), and because individuals consider their group affiliation a core part of their identity, they perceive threats to the group similarly to personal threats (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). The underlying premise is that growth in immigrant populations heightens concerns about real and perceived competition for social and economic resources, which, in turn, fosters negative attitudes toward immigrants (e.g. Abascal, 2015).

Inconsistent findings on the attitudes of minority group members are a major issue with current group threat research. Following Blumer (1958) and Quillian (1995), empirical research on anti-immigrant sentiments has primarily examined how perceived group threat influences the attitudes only of majority group members toward immigrants. As societies have grown more diverse, however, scholars have increasingly analyzed the attitudes of minority groups toward immigrants (Foner et al., 2019; Meeusen et al., 2019) and compared these attitudes across varying levels of exclusion and marginalization (Becker, 2019; Enos and Gidron, 2018; Gorodzeisky and Glikman, 2018; Mustafa and Richards, 2019). Consistent with group threat theory, some suggest that the roots of prejudice are similar across different status groups, where perceived intergroup threat, competition, and desire for a positive group identity fuel anti-immigrant sentiments (e.g. Brylka et al., 2016; Cortland et al., 2017; Meeusen et al., 2019). Others argue that shared experiences of discrimination and marginalization may foster empathy and encourage tolerance toward immigrants among minority groups (e.g. Craig and Richeson, 2016; Just and Anderson, 2015; Sirin et al., 2016). As a result, whether minority group members are generally more accepting of immigrants than majority groups remains unclear.

We argue that inconsistencies in these results stem from insufficient attention to the nuances of individuals' attitudes toward immigrants, who may not be broadly pro- or anti-immigrant but may see immigrant presence as positive in some ways while

detrimental in others (Newman and Malhotra, 2019; Segovia and Defever, 2010). For instance, in their review article, Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) argue that opposition to immigration is not confined to material competition but is primarily driven by sociotropic concerns about national culture and group boundaries. Psychological research likewise highlights the role of symbolic and cultural threat in shaping prejudice toward immigrants (see Esses, 2021 for an extensive review). However, existing research rarely examines how individuals view economic and cultural threats within the same empirical framework.

In particular, we argue that individuals may hold differing attitudes toward immigrants' cultural contributions than toward their perceived economic impact (Kwon et al., 2024). Although some studies point in this direction, they are largely based on single-country analyses or confined to European contexts (e.g. Becker, 2019; Gorodzeisky and Glikman, 2018; Šedovič and Dražanová, 2025). As a result, there is limited cross-national evidence on whether the distinction between cultural and economic threat generalizes across diverse national settings. Because minority groups may have solidarity with immigrants in similar social positions but are also exposed to economic competition from newer immigrants, we hypothesize that, compared to members of majority groups, minority group members will have more favorable views of immigrants' cultural impacts, but not their economic impacts.

We merge cross-national attitude data with data on ethnic group power to test our hypotheses. Our attitude data comes from the International Social Survey Programme's (ISSP) third wave on National Identity (ISSP Research Group, 2015). Because the ISSP lacks an external measure of ethnic power, we integrate this with data on ethnic power and group discrimination from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) (Vogt et al., 2015) and Minorities at Risk (MAR; Minorities at Risk Project, 2009) projects. This approach allows us to examine how group-level discrimination affects respondents' attitudes toward both economic and cultural aspects of immigration.

We find that individuals from minority groups are less likely than majority group members to agree that immigrants undermine the national culture, suggesting that shared experiences of discrimination and marginalization may foster solidarity. However, we find no significant differences between minority and majority group members in agreement with the statement that immigrants take jobs away from people born in the country, suggesting that minorities perceive economic threat from immigrants similarly to majority group members. Our findings thus demonstrate significant variation in attitudes toward immigrants depending on the issue under consideration and the social position of the survey respondent, which underscores the importance of treating anti-immigrant sentiment as a multidimensional phenomenon.

Immigrant threat and social position

Beginning with Blumer (1958), who specifically restricted his analysis to prejudicial "feelings in the case of a dominant racial group" (p. 4), early versions of group threat theory focused exclusively on the attitudes and perspectives of dominant group members. Following Blumer, scholars in the United States expanded on group threat theory to explain how White racist attitudes and violence intensified in response to growing Black

social and political influence (Blalock, 1967; Reed, 1972; Tolnay et al., 1989). Quillian's (1995) seminal paper adapted the theory to scrutinize how dominant groups respond to immigration by linking individual- and contextual-level conditions to anti-immigrant attitudes. This logic also resonates with social dominance theory, which similarly emphasizes that dominant groups are motivated to preserve existing status hierarchies and resist changes that could erode their relative group advantage (e.g. Küpper et al., 2010; Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius and Pratto, 2001).

Comparative research has further consolidated group threat as the most widely used framework for explaining public opposition to immigrants, showing that anti-immigrant sentiments arise when immigrants are seen as a threat to the dominant group's political, economic, or racial position (e.g. Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2016; Hawley, 2011; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). In their review article, Ceobanu and Escandell (2010) emphasize that such a perceived threat may stem from both material concerns over economic resources and symbolic concerns about national identity, cultural cohesion, and group boundaries. At the same time, they argue that this heavy reliance on competitive threat has produced only a partial account of anti-immigrant attitudes, as distinct dimensions of threat are often collapsed into broad and undifferentiated measures.

As societies have become increasingly diverse, scholars have shifted their focus to examine anti-immigrant attitudes among minority groups[1] (Foner et al., 2019; Meeusen et al., 2019) and to compare these attitudes across groups stratified by structural disadvantage and exclusion (Becker, 2019; Enos and Gidron, 2018; Gorodzeisky and Glikman, 2018; Mustafa and Richards, 2019). Whether members of minority groups generally hold more pro-immigrant attitudes is not clear, however.

On the one hand, members of minority groups typically hold disadvantaged socioeconomic and cultural positions (Justino and Litchfield, 2003). Due to this vulnerable status, they are often more sensitive to zero-sum competition and more likely to perceive economic threats that may arise with the arrival of new immigrant groups, which can lead to prejudiced attitudes toward these groups (Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2018; Pichler, 2010; Scheepers et al., 2002). In this sense, the mechanisms of group conflict and social identity that fuel prejudice—dissatisfaction about the state of the economy (Just and Anderson, 2015), low socioeconomic status (Semyonov et al., 2008), racial prejudice (Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2016), and lack of intergroup contact (Brylka et al., 2016)—may operate similarly across groups with different levels of social power and discrimination.

On the other hand, the solidarity literature suggests that groups experiencing higher levels of discrimination tend to have lower levels of anti-immigrant attitudes. This may be because their own histories of migration or integration allow them to identify more common grounds with new immigrant groups (Abdelhadi and O'Brien, 2020; Cortland et al., 2017; Craig and Richeson, 2016; Meeusen et al., 2019; Sirin et al., 2016). Typical examples include mechanisms such as shared religion and more intergroup contact (Hindriks et al., 2014), citizenship status (Just and Anderson, 2015), unfair treatment by the government (Meeusen et al., 2019), duration of residence (van der Zwan et al., 2017), religiosity (Mustafa and Richards, 2019), and the concept of linked fate—the belief that an individual's well-being is tied to the broader group's status—can also help explain

why members of minority groups often express solidarity with immigrants (e.g. Dawson, 1994; Gay et al., 2016; Jones, 2019; Simien, 2005).

We argue that the gap between these two literatures is partially caused by the lack of attention to the distinction between economic and cultural forms of perceived immigrant threat. While earlier studies often treated anti-immigrant sentiment as a single dimension, individuals can view immigration as threatening in distinct ways depending on the nature of the concern involved (Kwon et al., 2024; Newman and Malhotra, 2019; Segovia and Defever, 2010). We posit that social position shapes how these threats are perceived. Specifically, members of minority groups, who often face economic insecurity and precarious labor market conditions, may be especially sensitive to economic threat posed by immigration such as competition for jobs or resources (e.g. Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2018; Just and Anderson, 2015). At the same time, their experiences of discrimination and marginalization can foster empathy and symbolic solidarity with other minority groups, which in turn may reduce the perception that immigrants undermine national traditions, values, or identity (i.e. cultural threat; e.g. Abdelhadi and O'Brien, 2020; Cortland et al., 2017).

Therefore, we hypothesize that (1) minority group members will express similar levels of concern about the economic threat of immigration as members of majority groups but (2) will be less likely than majority group members to view immigrants as a cultural threat. Similar patterns have been documented in the Eastern European context, particularly in single-country studies from Russia, where dominant titular groups are more likely to perceive immigration as a cultural threat than non-titular or marginalized minorities (e.g. Alexseev, 2011; Brunarska, 2019; Demidova and Paas, 2013). Our study builds on these insights by investigating whether such divergence between cultural and economic threats systematically varies by social position—that is, between majority and minority groups across diverse national contexts.

Data and method

We use individual-level attitude and demographic data from the ISSP, a cross-national research initiative that carries out annual surveys on a wide range of salient social issues (ISSP Research Group, 2015). We use data from the third wave on national identity (2013), which was the only survey round that included a full battery of immigration questions across multiple issue areas. This wave is also the most recent ISSP survey that can be consistently matched to group-level discrimination measures from the MAR dataset. Since the latest version of MAR extends only through 2009, the 2013 ISSP offers the closest temporal alignment between individual attitudes and structural discrimination. The final analytic sample consists of respondents from 19 countries spanning Europe (Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, and the United Kingdom), the Middle East (Israel and Turkey), Asia (India and Philippines), and the Americas (Mexico and the United States). While other international surveys also offer broad geographic coverage, the ISSP is uniquely suited for this analysis because it combines multi-continent representation with a detailed battery of immigration-related questions, thus enabling valid cross-national comparisons of attitudes toward immigrants.

Each of our two dependent variables captures a distinct type of perceived threat from immigration: economic and cultural. These questions begin with the baseline prompt, "There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in [COUNTRY]. (By 'immigrants' we mean people who come to settle in [COUNTRY]). How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?"

1. **Economic Threat:** Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in [COUNTRY].
2. **Cultural Threat:** [COUNTRY'S] culture is generally undermined by immigrants.

Respondents are then asked to respond to these statements with a five-item Likert-type response scale ranging from "agree strongly" to "disagree strongly." For ease of interpretation, we recoded these variables so that higher values represent more negative attitudes toward immigrants.

To construct our key independent variable (i.e. level of group-based discrimination), we merged the group-level data from the MAR and EPR datasets with individual-level data from the ISSP survey, matching respondents by ethnicity, religion, home language, and geographic region on a country-by-country basis. Several countries were excluded because no ISSP respondents could be matched to identifiable MAR/EPR groups, typically due to very small or unrepresented minority populations in the ISSP sample.[2]

The EPR dataset identifies all politically significant ethnic groups in a country and classifies each according to its collective access to executive-level state power (Vogt et al., 2015). The EPR defines ethnic power as the degree of formal political control exercised by an ethnic group over state institutions, depending on whether it monopolizes, shares, or is excluded from power. Using EPR categories, we coded respondents as belonging to the dominant group if their group was classified as *Monopoly*, *Dominant*, or *Senior Partner*. This approach allows us to systematically identify groups that collectively hold political authority. However, because the EPR focuses primarily on political representation rather than multidimensional exclusion, it is less suitable for identifying the range of structural discrimination experienced by marginalized groups.

To capture such discrimination, we then used the MAR dataset, which systematically records whether ethnopolitical minorities experience institutionalized restrictions in political, economic, religious, and linguistic domains (Minorities at Risk Project, 2009). These indicators reflect structural discrimination, which we define as state-based inequalities that limit a group's access to material and symbolic resources regardless of individual characteristics. Specifically, in the MAR dataset, economic discrimination ranges from 0 ("no discrimination") to 4 ("restrictive policies") and captures whether public policy or social practice limits a group's economic opportunities. Political discrimination also ranges from 0 ("no discrimination") to 4 ("exclusion/repressive policy") and reflects the extent to which public policies restrict a group's political participation or representation. Religious discrimination is measured on a scale from 0 ("no restrictions") to 3 ("activity sharply restricted"), capturing limits on a group's ability to observe or practice its religion. Linguistic discrimination is measured using the same 0–3 scale, reflecting restrictions on speaking, publishing, or receiving instruction in the group's

language. We combined these four measures into an additive index of discrimination (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$), which we rescaled to range from 0 to 1 for ease of interpretation.

Groups that are widely recognized as facing severe repression, such as the Palestinians in Israel or the Chechens in Russia, appear at the upper end of the distribution (see Table 3 in Appendix 1 for a table listing the 10 highest-scoring groups in our final sample). Individuals associated with groups experiencing any form of political, economic, religious, or linguistic discrimination were coded according to this index, whereas members of majority groups (as identified through EPR) were assigned a value of zero. In theory, a group might be identified in the EPR as holding power in government as a *Monopoly*, *Dominant*, or *Senior Partner* and simultaneously recorded in the MAR dataset as experiencing discrimination. South Africa was the only country where this issue occurred: the Zulu are classified as a "senior partner" in the EPR but are also coded as discriminated against in the MAR data, as are other "junior partner" groups (Asians and Coloreds). For this reason, we omit South Africa from the main analyses. Alternative models including respondents from South Africa produce substantively similar results.

We selected demographic control variables from the ISSP based on prior research. *Age* is measured as a continuous variable in decades. *Female* is a dummy variable for sex, coded as 1 for females and 0 for males, respectively. *Citizen* is a binary indicator of whether the respondent holds citizenship in the country in which they reside. *Cosmopolitan* represents membership in the urban elite, coded as 1 if the respondent (1) resides in a large city or suburb and (2) has either an education level or a household income at least one standard deviation above the country average. We constructed this configurational measure rather than including education and income as separate controls because both variables can vary substantially in how they denote social position depending on whether the respondent is urban or rural. Higher educated, and particularly higher income, rural dwellers are often large landowners in extractive or farming industries, which does not necessarily denote a cosmopolitan social position (e.g. Gorman and Seguin, 2018). Finally, *Discrimination* refers to the group-level index described above, which captures political, economic, religious, and linguistic forms of structural exclusion.

For our modeling strategy, we take a two-step approach. We first estimate a set of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models with country-level fixed effects to establish the baseline relationships between the overall level of discrimination faced by a respondent's identity group and their assessment of immigration-related threats. We model each dependent variable as a function of discrimination and demographic controls, clustering standard errors by country and using multiple imputation to account for missing data. We generated 10 imputations for each model, transforming all variables prior to imputing (Von Hippel, 2009).

Next, because attitudes toward immigrants likely influence one another, we estimate a nonrecursive path model[3] that allows economic and cultural threat assessments to predict one another while simultaneously testing their associations with discrimination. To account for between-country heterogeneity, we residualize all variables by regressing them on country dummies and using the residuals in our path model, thereby netting out country-level means prior to estimation. We then estimate the path model using full-information maximum likelihood with missing values (MLMV) and 5000 bootstrap replications, clustering standard errors by country.

Results

Our descriptive results suggest that 33.8% of majority group members agree or strongly agree that immigrants undermine national culture, compared with 29.1% of minority group members. Disagreement with this statement is more common in both groups and is slightly higher among minority group members (42.1%) than among majority group members (39.9%). At the same time, perceptions of economic threat are more pronounced in both groups, and the difference between them is smaller: nearly half of respondents in both minority (47.9%) and majority groups (49.6%) agree or strongly agree that immigrants take jobs away from the native-born, whereas substantially smaller shares disagree or strongly disagree with this statement (28.7% of minority group members and 27.1% of majority group members). Taken together, these initial findings suggest that minority group members may be relatively more tolerant in cultural terms, but not in economic terms. Importantly, however, both groups exhibit broadly negative attitudes toward immigrants, underscoring that minority status may not imply overall pro-immigrant sentiment. We next assess whether these descriptive differences persist after accounting for demographic characteristics and cross-national variation.

Table 1 and Figure 1 present results from the fixed-effects OLS regression models. The coefficients show that perceptions of economic and cultural threats posed by immigration follow similar demographic patterns: anti-immigrant attitudes of both varieties increase with age and citizenship and are lower among cosmopolitan residents. Gender is not statistically associated with either variable. Consistent with prior research, these results suggest that older respondents and citizens express higher perceived threat from immigration while urban, higher-status respondents express lower perceived threat.

Importantly, while our discrimination measure has no statistical relationship with assessments of economic threat, we find that respondents who belong to groups that experience more discrimination are less likely to agree that immigrants undermine national culture ($\beta = -0.30$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that solidarity among minority groups may extend to symbolic or cultural concerns, but not to economic concerns. This distinction is consistent with arguments that competition for material resources may limit solidarity across minority groups.

Table 2 and Figure 2 show results from a nonrecursive path model that simultaneously estimates the relationships between economic and cultural threat perceptions while controlling for discrimination and demographic covariates. The reciprocal paths between the two outcomes are large and highly significant (βs = 0.24, 0.24, $p < 0.001$), confirming that economic and cultural threat perceptions reinforce one another. With these mutual effects taken into account, we find a pattern that closely mirrors the OLS results: discrimination remains a nonsignificant predictor of economic threat and retains its negative association with cultural threat ($\beta = -0.32$, $p < 0.001$). Substantively, this corresponds to roughly a one-third-point decrease on the five-point cultural threat scale when comparing the least to the most discriminated groups—an effect roughly equivalent to a hypothetical 150 years of aging, 60% stronger than citizenship, and more than three times larger than being cosmopolitan.

Figure 3 summarizes the path model visually. The figure highlights the reciprocal link between cultural and economic threat perceptions and the distinct influence of

Table 1. Fixed-effects regression models of economic and cultural threat perceptions.

	Economic threat	Cultural threat
Age	0.04***	0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Woman	0.01	−0.04
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Citizen	0.54*	0.33**
	(0.21)	(0.09)
Cosmopolitan	−0.20***	−0.13*
	(0.04)	(0.05)
Discrimination	0.11	−0.30**
	(0.19)	(0.09)
N	22,355	22,355
Countries	19	19

Note. Estimates are unstandardized coefficients with robust standard errors clustered by country. All models include country fixed effects. Multiple imputation (10 imputations) was used to address missing data. *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

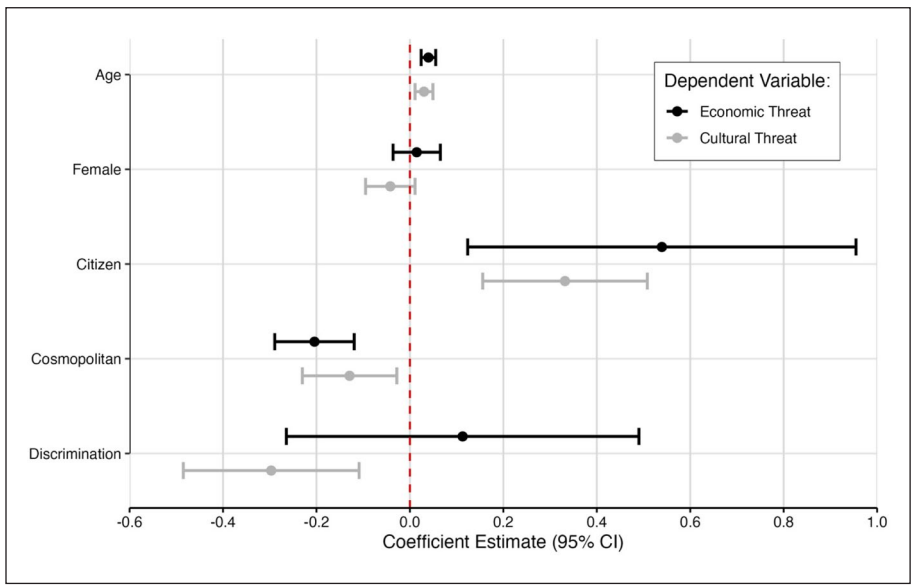


Figure 1. Fixed-effects regression models of economic and cultural threat perceptions.
Note. Black dots and whiskers represent coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from the economic threat regression, while gray markers represent those from the cultural threat regression. Estimates are unstandardized coefficients with robust standard errors clustered by country. All models include country fixed effects. Multiple imputation (10 imputations) was used to address missing data.

Table 2. Country-adjusted nonrecursive path model of economic and cultural threat perceptions.

	Economic threat	Cultural threat
Age	0.03***	0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Woman	0.03	−0.05*
	(0.02)	(0.02)
Citizen	0.46*	0.20***
	(0.20)	(0.05)
Cosmopolitan	−0.17***	−0.08*
	(0.03)	(0.04)
Discrimination	0.18	−0.32***
	(0.20)	(0.09)
Reciprocal Effect	0.24***	0.24***
	(0.01)	(0.02)
N	22,355	22,355
Countries	19	19

Note. The model was estimated using full-information maximum likelihood with missing values (MLMV). Entries are unstandardized coefficients with bootstrapped standard errors (4693 successful iterations), clustered by country. All variables were within-transformed to remove between-country variation; country-specific means were partialed out via regression on country dummies prior to estimation.
*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

discrimination, which appears to mitigate cultural—but not economic—hostility toward immigrants. The stability of these effects across both modeling approaches indicates that this relationship is not an artifact of cross-issue correlations or country-level heterogeneity. Together, these findings reinforce the interpretation that members of minority groups are more tolerant on symbolic or identity-related dimensions of immigration, even as economic competition continues to shape their attitudes.

Discussion and conclusion

Understanding minority groups' attitudes toward immigrants is increasingly important as societies grow more diverse and multiethnic. Yet, existing studies offer conflicting findings: some suggest that minority groups generally express solidarity with immigrants (e.g. Abdelhadi and O'Brien, 2020; Cortland et al., 2017), while others find that minorities display similar or even stronger exclusionary attitudes than majority groups (e.g. Gorodzeisky and Semyonov, 2018; Just and Anderson, 2015). Our study helps reconcile these inconsistencies by showing that attitudes toward immigrants vary across types of perceived threat. Specifically, we show that minority groups express comparable levels of concern about the economic consequences of immigration but are less likely than majority groups to view immigrants as a cultural threat. This distinction between cultural and economic threat perceptions refines existing theories of intergroup relations by showing how social position shapes not only the strength but also the content of anti-immigrant attitudes and highlights that solidarity and competition can coexist within the same social groups (e.g. Meeusen et al., 2019; Schlueter and Scheepers, 2010).

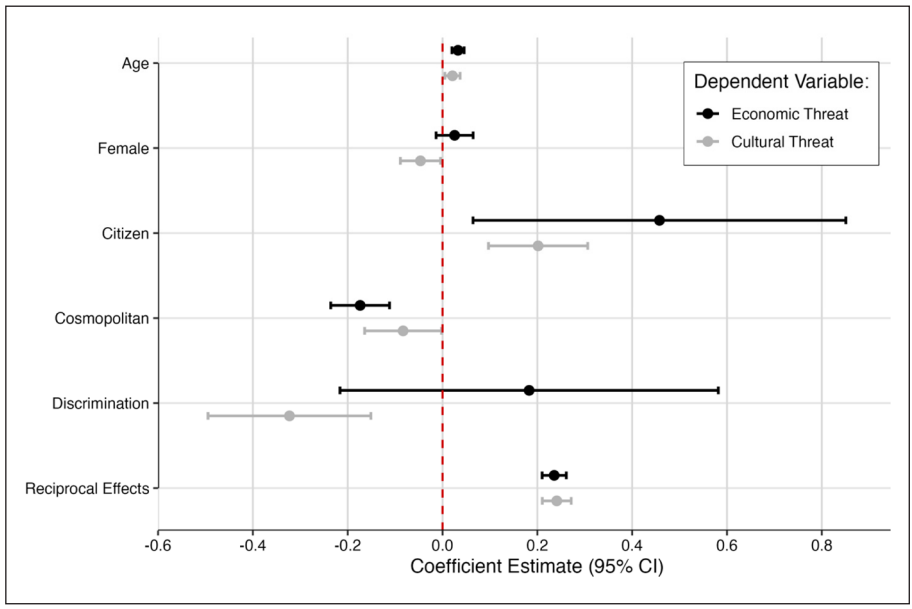


Figure 2. Country-adjusted nonrecursive path model of economic and cultural threat perceptions.
Note. Black dots and whiskers represent coefficients and 95% confidence intervals from the economic threat portion of the model, while gray markers represent those from the cultural threat portion. The "Reciprocal Effects" row shows the estimated effect of each dependent variable on the other. Coefficients are unstandardized and were estimated using full-information maximum likelihood with missing values (MLMV). Confidence intervals are bootstrapped (4693 successful iterations) with standard errors clustered by country. All variables were within-transformed to remove between-country variation; country-specific means were partialed out via regression on country dummies prior to estimation.

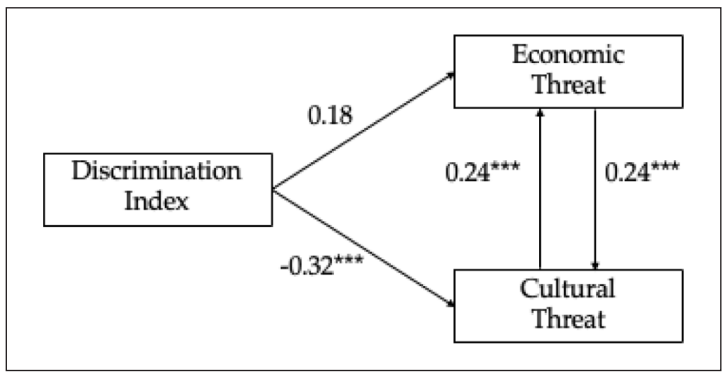


Figure 3. Estimated reciprocal paths between economic and cultural threat perceptions.
Note. Arrows represent estimated directional relationships between economic and cultural threat perceptions and discrimination. Demographic controls are included in the model but omitted from the diagram. Coefficients are unstandardized and were estimated using full-information maximum likelihood with missing values (MLMV). Confidence intervals are bootstrapped (4693 successful iterations) with standard errors clustered by country. All variables were within-transformed to remove between-country variation; country-specific means were partialed out via regression on country dummies prior to estimation.

Because minority status is associated with economic concerns about immigration, it is plausible that minorities' attitudes might be more sensitive to overall economic conditions. Moreover, minorities' immigration attitudes might be more sensitive to economic, as opposed to cultural, framing of immigration, and when the economy is more salient, we might expect minorities to have similar attitudes toward immigration as majority groups. Future research might examine how fluctuations in economic conditions (Dancygier and Donnelly, 2013) or political campaigns focusing on the economy and immigration (Dancygier and Margalit, 2020; Helbling, 2014) affect immigration attitudes differentially by group status.

One explanation for our findings is that experiences of discrimination heighten sensitivity to processes of stigmatization and symbolic exclusion, reducing perceptions of immigrants as identity-based threats, while simultaneously heightening awareness of economic vulnerability and leaving economic threat perceptions largely intact. We interpret this as evidence of symbolic or cultural solidarity, rather than generalized pro-immigrant sentiment—a distinction that refines theories of linked fate and intergroup empathy by showing that solidarity is contingent on issue salience and perceived competition (Jones, 2019; Kustov, 2023; Meeusen et al., 2019). Future research could advance these findings by disentangling how different forms of discrimination (e.g. labor market vs symbolic or cultural exclusion) exert distinct effects on economic and cultural threat perceptions.

At the same time, our results demonstrate the limits of solidarity. Although shared experiences of discrimination are associated with lower levels of perceived cultural threat (e.g. Craig and Richeson, 2016; Just and Anderson, 2015; Sirin et al., 2016), in our data, both majority and minority group members are likelier to have negative attitudes toward immigration than positive.

These findings carry practical implications for how policymakers and community organizations approach immigrant integration. Because minority group members are less likely to perceive immigrants as a cultural threat, diverse neighborhoods and communities with larger minority populations may, on average, provide more culturally receptive environments for incoming immigrants and refugees. At the same time, the persistence of economic threat perceptions among minority groups—at levels comparable to those of majority group members—suggests that integration efforts should not assume that residential proximity to minority communities automatically translates into broad acceptance. Policies targeting economic growth and messaging stressing the economic benefits of immigration may ultimately produce greater immigrant acceptance.

However, we note several limitations in this study. First, our key independent variable captures structural discrimination at the group level and cannot account for within-group heterogeneity in personal experiences of exclusion or stigma. Our estimates should therefore be interpreted as reflecting average differences associated with group-level positions rather than direct effects of personal discrimination experiences. Whether the effects of discrimination stem from membership and identification with minority groups or from direct individual experiences with discrimination should be tested in future studies with individual-level measures of discrimination.

Second, we do not examine how immigration attitudes vary by the source country of immigrants. For instance, it is possible that minorities perceive less cultural threat from immigrants with whom they share a group identity, though previous research cautions that even similar or neighboring groups may have antagonistic relations (Bonikowski, 2017). More broadly, scholars often assume that groups appearing similar on classificatory schemes such as region, religion, or phenotype see themselves as culturally proximate, when in practice ethnic boundaries are historically shaped, contested, and sometimes defined by intergroup hostility (Brubaker, 2004; Wimmer, 2013). We also do not differentiate between how minority groups are discriminated against. It may be, for example, that minorities facing religious discrimination may be generally more favorable to religious minorities (Braun, 2020), and discriminated minorities may perceive a smaller social or cultural distance from immigrants who share similar traditions or histories of marginalization—which could partly account for why minority respondents are less likely to view immigrants as undermining national culture. Future studies should explore how perceived cultural overlap and value similarity shape these distinctions in threat perceptions, as well as how distinct forms of discrimination produce differentiated solidarities.

Finally, our analysis is limited to the set of countries included in one specific cross-national wave (ISSP, 2015), which places boundaries on the generalizability of our findings across time and national contexts. Since public attitudes toward immigration are shaped by historical events, policy debates, and economic conditions, the associations we observe here likely reflect the specific political contexts captured by the 2015 survey. Substantial shifts in immigration flows and politicization since that period, most notably the European refugee crisis (UNHCR, 2015) and subsequent waves of nationalist mobilization (e.g. Dinas et al., 2019; Hangartner et al., 2019), may have altered both the level and structure of perceived economic and cultural threat. In addition, although the ISSP provides multi-continent coverage, our analytic sample still heavily relies on European countries, with no coverage of African or South American countries. Consequently, our conclusions may not extend to regions where immigration histories, racial hierarchies, and patterns of minority incorporation differ substantially. Further research is needed to extend this approach using longitudinal data and examining attitudes toward specific immigrant groups.

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Notes

1. In this article, we identify minority group members through discrimination, and 'minority' does not necessarily refer to numerical size but to structural disadvantage and political exclusion. Nevertheless, all minority groups in our dataset are also numerical minorities within their national contexts.
2. Specifically, respondents from Japan, Switzerland, and Taiwan were excluded because no respondents in the ISSP sample could be reliably matched to MAR/EPR groups. Minority populations in these countries are extremely small and did not appear in the ISSP data.
3. Because the model is saturated (df = 0), global fit indices are not informative; our inferences focus on the estimated path coefficients with bootstrapped standard errors.

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Résumé

Les études portant sur les attitudes des minorités à l'égard des immigrés ont donné des résultats contrastés: alors que certaines semblent indiquer que les minorités font preuve d'une plus grande tolérance envers les immigrés, d'autres montrent que leurs attitudes sont similaires à celles des groupes majoritaires. Nous soutenons que ces incohérences découlent de différences dans la manière dont les individus évaluent les impacts culturels et économiques des immigrés. À partir des données du Programme international d'enquêtes sociales (ISSP), croisées avec des mesures de la discrimination politique, économique, religieuse et linguistique au niveau groupal issues des ensembles de données de « Minorities at Risk » (MAR) et « Ethnic Power Relations » (EPR), nous examinons comment les groupes minoritaires et majoritaires évaluent l'immigration sous ses aspects économique et culturel. Il ressort de cette étude que les membres des groupes minoritaires sont nettement moins enclins que ceux des groupes majoritaires à considérer les immigrés comme une menace culturelle, mais qu'ils expriment des niveaux de préoccupation similaires concernant les répercussions économiques de l'immigration. Ces résultats semblent indiquer que les groupes minoritaires peuvent éprouver un sentiment de solidarité envers les immigrés lié à des expériences communes de discrimination—ce qui atténue leur perception des immigrés comme une menace culturelle—alors même que leurs préoccupations concernant la concurrence économique restent similaires à celles des groupes majoritaires. Nous concluons que le sentiment anti-immigrés est multidimensionnel, ce qui permet de mieux comprendre comment la position sociale influe sur les attitudes.

Mots-clés

discrimination, groupes minoritaires, menace collective, positions anti-immigrés, solidarité intergroupe

Resumen

Los estudios sobre las actitudes de las minorías hacia los inmigrantes han arrojado resultados contradictorios, ya que algunos sugieren que las minorías son más tolerantes con los inmigrantes, mientras que otros encuentran que las minorías se asemejan a los grupos mayoritarios en sus actitudes. El artículo argumenta que estas inconsistencias se derivan de las diferencias en la forma en que las personas evalúan el impacto cultural y económico de los inmigrantes. Se utilizan datos del International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), vinculados con medidas de discriminación política, económica,

religiosa y lingüística a nivel grupal de las bases de datos de Minorías en Riesgo (MAR) y Relaciones de Poder Étnico (EPR), para analizar cómo los grupos minoritarios y mayoritarios evalúan la inmigración en las dimensiones económica y cultural. El artículo encuentra que los miembros de los grupos minoritarios son significativamente menos propensos que los miembros de los grupos mayoritarios a ver a los inmigrantes como una amenaza cultural, pero expresan niveles similares de preocupación por el impacto económico de la inmigración. Esto sugiere que los grupos minoritarios pueden sentir un sentido de solidaridad con los inmigrantes basado en experiencias compartidas de discriminación, lo que reduce la percepción de los inmigrantes como una amenaza cultural, incluso cuando sus preocupaciones sobre la competencia económica siguen siendo similares a las de los grupos mayoritarios. Concluimos que el sentimiento antiinmigrante es multidimensional, lo que ayuda a esclarecer cómo la posición social moldea las actitudes.

Palabras clave
actitudes antiinmigrantes, amenaza grupal, discriminación, grupos minoritarios, solidaridad intergrupal

Appendix 1

Table 3. Ten groups with the highest MAR discrimination scores.

Group	Country	Economic discrimination [0–4]	Political discrimination [0–4]	Religious discrimination [0–3]	Linguistic discrimination [0–3]
Palestinians	Israel	4	4	2	0
Russians	Estonia	4	4	0	2
Kashmiris	India	3	4	2	0
Chechens	Russia	4	4	1	0
Muslim (noncitizens)	France	3	3	2	0
Kurds	Turkey	2	4	0	2
Russians	Latvia	3	1	0	2
Muslims	India	3	3	1	0
Serbs	Croatia	3	3	1	0
Turks	Germany	2	1	2	0