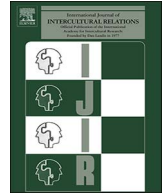


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# Threat and Prejudice against Syrian Refugees in Canada: Assessing the Moderating Effects of Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, and Assimilation

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## ABSTRACT

A survey experiment ( $N = 529$ ) was used to test the moderating effects of intergroup ideologies (assimilation, multiculturalism, and interculturalism) on the relationship between social dominance orientation (SDO) and expressions of prejudice under conditions of intergroup threat. Moderated multiple regression analyses suggest a multicultural integration frame moderates the relationship between SDO and feelings toward Syrian refugees in Canada when the target outgroup is portrayed as a source of intergroup threat. This moderating effect was unique to the relationship between SDO and feelings toward Syrians and did not extend to other correlates of prejudice including beliefs in zero-sum group competition or a multicultural ideology, nor did it extend to more general measures of prejudice (i.e., attitudes toward immigrants or evaluations of intercultural contact). Findings suggest the prejudice-reducing effects of a multicultural integration narrative affect group evaluations and functions by targeting beliefs in social dominance, rather than zero-sum group competition or ideological support for cultural diversity. The results offer insights into the prejudice-reducing potential for two alternative integration narratives that are institutionalized in Canada.

## Introduction

Immigrant integration presents members of the host society with contrasting considerations. To some, immigration invokes sentiments of egalitarianism and group inclusion, while to others an influx of newcomers into society is perceived as an inherent threat (Pratto & Lemieux, 2001; Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). Social dominance theory (SDT; Ho et al., 2012; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) proposes that individuals have different psychological orientations that affect whether they are motivated to view diversity as a social burden or as a resource. Those with a higher level of social dominance orientation (SDO), a social ideology endorsing hierarchical intergroup relations, are motivated to behave in ways that maintain ingroup dominance. For high social dominators, immigration is more likely to be perceived in terms of group competition, where any gains made by immigrants are perceived as a direct loss for host society members, resulting in more negative attitudes toward immigrants (Esses, Jackson & Armstrong, 1998). Individuals reporting lower levels of SDO, on the other hand, have a tendency to respond positively to cultural diversity (Levin et al., 2012).

While the relationship between SDO and prejudice has been well documented (see Sibley & Duckitt, 2008), it is only recently that social scientists have begun to examine how different normative ideological arguments about immigrant integration might influence

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the relationship between individual differences in social attitudes and expressions of prejudice (e.g., Levin et al., 2012; Rattan & Ambady, 2013). Social dominance theory suggests that different ideological frameworks to manage immigrant integration and cultural diversity serve to enhance or attenuate the relationship between SDO and prejudice depending on whether they are supportive of cultural diversity (Levin et al., 2012; Pratto et al., 2006). Multiculturalism, an intergroup ideology that is strongly supportive of cultural diversity, advocates the maintenance of newcomers' heritage culture without placing limits on the need for newcomers' to adopt the dominant groups' culture as a precondition to participating fully in the larger society. By advocating the maintenance and sharing of newcomers' cultural heritage, multiculturalism is an ideological approach to integration that is inherently hierarchy-attenuating. In contrast, assimilation promotes cultural homogeneity by re-categorizing minorities as part of the dominant cultural group before they may participate fully in the larger society (Berry, 2006; Guimond, Sablonnière & Nugier, 2014).

#### *Mixed effects of multiculturalism on intergroup attitudes*

As a hierarchy-attenuating intergroup ideology, multiculturalism is predicated on the celebration of group differences. The social psychological literature has uncovered mixed support for whether pro-diversity integration ideologies like multiculturalism ameliorate or exacerbate intercultural relations. Findings from correlational and experimental studies suggest that reductions in prejudice toward minority groups are associated with intergroup ideologies like multiculturalism. Specifically, it is argued that multiculturalism is a hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing myth (Levin et al., 2012) that simultaneously promotes the maintenance of minorities' heritage culture while encouraging integration into the host society (Guimond et al., 2013; Guimond, Sablonnière & Nugier, 2014; Levin et al., 2012; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004; Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002; Verkuyten, 2005). Levin et al. (2012) present correlational and experimental evidence to suggest that the relationship between SDO and prejudice is moderated by the normative integration ideology. Whereas an ideological frame of assimilation serves to strengthen the influences of SDO on prejudice, pro-diversity integration frames such as multiculturalism can weaken the relationship between SDO and prejudice. In spite of these positive findings for the attenuating effects of pro-diversity integration frames on expressions of prejudice, others have identified certain situations under which multiculturalism has been shown to backfire (Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010; Sasaki & Vorauer, 2013; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2011).

Social psychological models of intergroup conflict posit that perceptions of intergroup threat and competition result in antagonistic responses toward outgroup members (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001). Normative and experimentally induced pro-diversity integration frames have been shown to interact with individual differences in social attitudes resulting in increased prejudice toward outgroups under threatening contexts. For example, three studies by Kauff et al. (2013) show that the negative relationship between right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and pro-diversity beliefs gets stronger the more country-level integration policies are supportive of diversity (Study 1). Findings from experimental manipulations that promote multiculturalism (Study 2) and make cultural diversity salient (Study 3) suggest that respondents high in RWA respond to pro-diversity stimuli with even more prejudice, an effect which may be mediated by perceived threat. Because multiculturalism promotes group differences, "the salience of these divisions may induce partisans to attribute their disagreement to the nature or essence of the outgroup when intergroup threat is made salient (Correll, Park & Smith, 2008, p. 473). As a result, under conditions of intergroup threat it is possible that multiculturalism might induce dominant group members to respond *more* negatively to target outgroups (Vorauer & Sasaki, 2011). Although multicultural ideological frames can trigger positive intergroup attitudes (e.g., Levin et al., 2012; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004), the positive effects of multiculturalism can also disappear (Correll et al., 2008) or even backfire and enhance prejudice and hostility in scenarios characterized by conflict and threat (Morrison et al., 2010; Sasaki & Vorauer, 2013; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2011). In this study, we intend to explore this relationship in more detail by examining the moderating effects of variations in pro-diversity intergroup ideologies on the interaction between social attitudes and intercultural relations under threatening conditions.

#### *Multiculturalism and interculturalism: distinct pluralist integration ideologies in Canada*

Integration ideologies are institutionalized through public policy frameworks (Guimond et al., 2013) with considerable between-country variation in the extent to which a given integration framework is supportive of diversity (MPI, 2014; MIPEX, 2015). One way to study the effect of integration frames that lie along this continuum is to vary the degree to which their underlying ideological premise legitimizes group-based hierarchies and social (in)equality. Serge Guimond et al. (2014) are right to note that social psychologists' focus on, "assimilation, colorblindness [individualism], and multiculturalism should not be read as implying that these are the only intergroup ideologies that matter" (p. 146). However, to date, limited research has begun to model normative integration ideologies outside of these three contexts.<sup>1</sup> A recent exception is a study by Verkuyten (2016) who contrasted the moderating role of two variants of pro-diversity intergroup ideologies on the relationship between minority group members' dual identity and their intention to protest on behalf of their group. In addition to the traditional intergroup ideologies of multiculturalism and assimilation, interculturalism is introduced which takes a middle ground position with core tenants that seek to both attenuate and enhance certain group hierarchies. Interculturalism strives simultaneously to value diversity and the full participation of newcomers in society, while promoting characteristics of the heritage national society by defining the public culture in relation to host society members' language and cultural values (see Bouchard, 2015). Results from Verkuyten (2016) online survey experiment suggest that the effects of an intercultural integration ideology frame on immigrants' intention to protest discrimination are weaker than a multiculturalism frame and may not be distinguishable from assimilation. Arguably, research on the moderating effects of intergroup ideologies on the

<sup>1</sup> But see Rosenthal & Levy (2010, 2012) for discussions of a 'polycultural' alternative, which recognizes the importance of shared cultural histories.

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