



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Intercultural Relations

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel

Perceived threat mediates the relationship between national identification and support for immigrant exclusion: A Cross-National Test of Intergroup Threat Theory

Luca Caricati

Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Cultural Industries, University of Parma, B.go Carissimi 10, 43121 Parma, Italy



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Intergroup threat
National identification
Immigrant exclusion
Multilevel modelling
National wealth

ABSTRACT

Hypotheses derived from intergroup threat theory and social identity theory were tested by analyzing cross-national data about national identity and attitude toward immigrants. National identification, perceived threat and support for irregular immigrant exclusion were considered as variables at the individual level. Gross domestic product, Gini index and individualism–collectivism index were used as national descriptors. Results indicated that, across 33 nations worldwide, intergroup threat mediated the relationship between national identification and support for immigrant exclusion. Moreover, the level of national wealth moderated this mediation so that perceived threat was a stronger mediator in rich than in poor nations. On the other hand, Gini index and individualism did not affect this mediation. Present findings are supportive for intergroup threat theory and social identity theory.

Introduction

The topic of irregular migration is receiving increasing attention in public and political debates worldwide. One source of debate lies in the question of whether richer nations should help or reject irregular immigrants. The terms “irregular immigrants” covers a heterogeneous group of people who, regardless of their reason for migration, enter or stay in a country without legal authorization. Accordingly, the strongest rhetoric against migrants is linked to the social myths and stereotypes that irregular immigrants are criminals, terrorists, welfare abusers or unfair competitors with respect to job and other national resources (e.g. Van Meeteren, 2012). Although research has clearly indicated that irregular migrants do not significantly increase criminality, do not abuse (and often under-use) welfare resources and do not reduce jobs to natives (e.g., Bell, 2014; Butcher & Piehl, 1998; Cyrus & Vogel, 2006; Jordan & Düvell, 2002), these myths are widely accepted in media as well as common wisdom. In a few words, migrants are often depicted and perceived as a threat to nations (e.g. Atwell Seate & Mastro, 2016). This perception of threat may lead to an increase in prejudice and discrimination against immigrants. Actually, perceived intergroup threat has been found to be a causal predictor of anti-immigrant feelings (Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006; Schlueter, Schmidt, & Wagner, 2008). This paper takes into account the effects of national attachment and perceived ingroup threat on support for exclusion of irregular immigrants, considering the role of some national features such as the level of national wealth and social (in)equality. We focused on irregular immigrants because of they represent a key concern for politics and mass-communication worldwide (Fryberg et al., 2012; Thorbjørnsrud, 2015). Moreover, irregular immigrants appear to be perceived as a danger for nation and categorized as “bad” immigrants (e.g., Colombo, Cherubini, Montali, & Marando, 2012). For example, Murray and Marx (2013) found that American undergraduates reported greater perceived threats and more prejudicial attitudes when responding to questions about irregular compared with regular immigrants. Similarly, Conway,

E-mail address: luca.caricati@unipr.it.<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2018.06.005>

Received 4 September 2017; Received in revised form 16 June 2018; Accepted 19 June 2018

0147-1767/© 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Grabe, and Grieses (2007) found that “illegal aliens” were mainly discussed as a threat for liberty, democracy, and safety in US. Given that the debate over unauthorized or irregular immigration appears to dominate public and political discourses (Goodman, Sirriyeh, & McMahon, 2017), epitomizing challenges related to the threat, fear, national sovereignty and work regulations (Murray & Marx, 2013; Thorbjørnsrud, 2015), it seems key to examine the people’s support for policies that exclude irregular immigrants.

According to intergroup threat theory (ITT, Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison, 2009), prejudice and discrimination against outgroups might be explained by perceived intergroup threat, that is, the perception by members of one group that another group may cause them material or symbolic harm. When group members perceive that material or symbolic resources of the ingroup are somewhat challenged, they experience threat to the collectives to which they belong. In response, group members may adopt different strategies such as derogating the threatening outgroup (e.g. Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Accordingly, intergroup threat perception has been proved to increase negative attitudes towards outgroups such as immigrants. For example, Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, and Martin (2005) showed that the more people perceived that immigrants would threaten the national economy, the more they showed discrimination against immigrants as a whole. Caricati, Mancini, and Marletta (2017) showed that, in two different samples, intergroup threat perception increased prejudice against immigrants in general and that this effect was mediated by conservative ideologies such as social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism.

Like ITT, social identity theory (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1979) also posits that people will attempt to protect the value of an ingroup when they perceive that such value is under attack or threatened. However, in SIT, the motivation to protect the threatened ingroup is affected by the members’ social identification, the extent to which people feel tied with a particular group. Higher identifiers, indeed, are more likely to display outgroup derogation (e.g. Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999), ingroup homogeneity (e.g. Falomir-Pichastor & Frederic, 2013), and to be more concerned with ingroup interests (e.g. Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002), especially in threatening contexts (e.g. Falomir-Pichastor, Gabarrot, & Mugny, 2009). Moreover, the extent to which people identify with particular groups may affect the extent to which intergroup threat is raised and the way in which people react to this threat. In fact, it has been showed that highly identified group members are more likely than less identified group members to experience intergroup threat (Riek et al., 2006), and to defend the integrity of the group when threatened (Branscombe, Wann, Noel, & Coleman, 1993; Jetten et al., 2002). Thus, higher social identification leads to an increase in perceived threat that in turn promotes negative intergroup behaviors such as prejudice and discrimination. Put in another way, perceived intergroup threat mediates the relationship between social identification and intergroup behaviors (e.g. Verkuyten, 2009).

The present research

Although Riek et al. (2006) meta-analysis supports the contention of ITT and SIT that identification affects ingroup threat and that ingroup threat in turn affects negative outgroup attitudes, the relationships between identity and threat and between threat and outgroup discrimination were considered separately, and so this meta-analysis did not supply any direct evidence that ingroup threat mediates the relationship between social identification and negative intergroup behavior. Nevertheless, several studies have tested and confirmed that social identification and intergroup threat perception increase negative attitudes and behavior towards migrants, and that intergroup threat perception mediates the effect of social identification on intergroup behaviors. For example, Verkuyten (2009) found that national identification with the Netherlands decreased tolerance for minority groups (i.e. immigrants), and this effect was significantly mediated by perceived threat from these groups. Similarly, Mashuri et al. (2014) found that perception of threat mediated the relationship between national identification as Indonesians and tolerance and help for Islamic religious minority groups. In the same way, Velasco González, Verkuyten, Weesie, and Poppe (2008) showed that, in the Netherlands, the effect of national identification on prejudice against Muslims was completely mediated by perceived national threat. Again, Louis, Esses, and Lalonde (2013), in two samples from Canada and Australia, showed that national identification increased perception that immigrants were a threat for nations, and was indirectly associated via this threat perception with more negative attitudes toward immigrants.

Although ITT has been tested with different samples, and in different parts of the world, we notice that little attention has been devoted to two important aspects. First, cross-national studies about the relationships among national identification, perceived threat and anti-immigrant attitudes are limited in number and have taken into account a limited number of nations (e.g. Louis et al., 2013). Hence, there is still little evidence that the pattern of relationships among national identity, perceived threat and anti-immigrant attitude is general to different cultures and nations. Second, to the best of our knowledge, the effects of national characteristics on these psychosocial processes have not been taken into account. This is somewhat surprising since Stephan et al. (2009) clearly stated that some national features could affect processes linked to perceived intergroup threat.

The aim of this paper was to address these gaps at least partially and our objectives were twofold. First, to determine whether mediation of the association between national identity and attitude toward immigrants by perceived ingroup threat could be detected in native-born people living in a wide range of nations and cultures. Second, to approach an innovative question trying to assess whether certain national characteristics moderate such relationships. Thus, we are concerned with hypotheses at both the individual and the national level, as well as the interaction between individual and national levels.

At the individual level, we expected that, across nations, national identification would increase native-born people’s support for exclusion of irregular migrants (Hypothesis 1) and perception of intergroup threat (Hypothesis 2). Similarly, we expected that the more citizens perceived that immigrants were threatening for nations, the more they would support immigrant exclusion (Hypothesis 3). Finally, we expected that perceived intergroup threat would mediate the relationship between national identification and support for exclusion of irregular immigrants (Hypothesis 4). Fig. 1 depicts the expected model. As indicated, at an individual level, we expected that national identification would increase support for immigrant exclusion by increasing intergroup threat perception.

At a national level, we considered certain variables which are linked to availability of resources, power inequality and ingroup-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7323588>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7323588>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)