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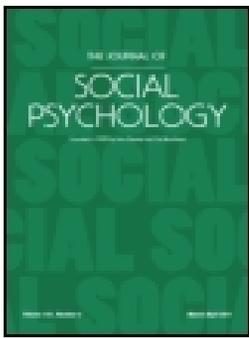
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Patriotism and the impact on perceived threat and immigration attitudes

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ABSTRACT

Patriotism and threat have been shown to predict immigration attitudes. We suggest that patriotism is influential in producing threat, and such threat drives anti-immigration attitudes, but this relationship is different for Whites and Latinos. All participants completed a patriotism scale (blind and constructive patriotism measures), a threat scale (realistic and symbolic threat), and anti-immigration attitude scale. Latinos showed lower blind patriotism, realistic threat, symbolic threat, and anti-immigration attitudes compared to Whites, with no differences in constructive patriotism. Threat partially mediated the relationship between blind patriotism and anti-immigration attitudes for Whites and fully mediated the relationship for Latinos. Threat partially mediated the relationship for cultural patriotism and anti-immigration attitude for Whites but not for Latinos. Implications for public policy and education concerning immigrant attitudes are discussed.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Immigration; Latinos;
patriotism; threat

Immigration has long been a topic of debate (Segovia & Defever, 2010). Since the English colonies, new immigrants (including both bonded servants and slaves) were resented, even though their presence was essential for colonial development and expansion (Espenshade & Hempstead, 1996; Takaki, 1993). With patriotic fervor, Benjamin Franklin was biased against German immigrants, resented their language and presence in the United States, and felt they would diminish the national character (Tischauer, 2002). Today, the increased number of foreigners born in the United States is projected to continue, reaching 19% of the population by 2050 (Passel & Cohn, 2008). Regardless of political party, there is not strong support for current immigration policy (Pew Research Center, 2014a). Thus, immigration is a contentious issue, and negative attitudes about immigrants and immigration are still present (Pew Research Center, 2015; Stokes, 2013). Research has addressed components of immigration attitudes (Ayers, Hofstetter, Schnakenberg, & Kolody, 2009; Lu & Nicholson-Crotty, 2010). Nevertheless, in order to better understand immigration attitudes, we were interested in whether patriotism would be predictive of perceived threat, and whether that threat would then predict anti-immigrant attitudes for U.S. samples of Whites and ethnic minorities.

Patriotism

Concern about inclusion of immigrants and who should be part of the body politic has been considered part of patriotism since ancient times (Viroli, 1995). Patriotism has been defined as an attachment and love for one's country (Schatz, Staub, & Lavine, 1999; Spry & Hornsey, 2007), and patriotism (a focus on individual membership and connection to nation) has been distinguished from nationalism (a focus on one's nation as opposed to other nations) (de Figueiredo & Elkins, 2003; Feshbach, 1991; Kosterman & Feshbach, 1989; Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, & Pratto, 1997). As a

psychological construct, patriotism becomes an important ideological stance for those in the dominant group, who are motivated to maintain social standing (Staerkle, Sidanius, Green, & Molina, 2005). As part of this motivation, two types of patriotism have been examined for immigration preferences. Blind patriotism “involves uncritical support for one’s country,” whereas constructive patriotism involves “positive change through questioning and criticizing national practices” (Schatz et al., 1999; Spry & Hornsey, 2007, p. 152). Controlling for right-wing authoritarianism, Spry and Hornsey (2007) demonstrated that blind patriotism, but not constructive patriotism, was predictive of support for immigration and support for providing cultural services to immigrants. Higher degrees of blind, but not constructive, patriotism produced less support for immigration and for providing services to immigrants.

Threat

Along with patriotism, threat is another construct that has been implicated in immigration attitudes. Threat is a psychological response that influences negative attitudes toward an out-group and its members (Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, & Martin, 2005). Threat can derive from one of four sources (realistic threat, symbolic threat, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes), and bias can emerge from what has been termed an integrated threat model (Curseu, Stoop, & Schalk, 2007; Stephan, Ybarra, & Bachman, 1999). Realistic threats “. . . concern threats to the very existence of the in-group (e.g., through warfare), threats to the political and economic power of the in-group, and threats to the physical or material well-being of the in-group or its members (e.g., their health)” (Stephan et al., 1999, p. 2222). Symbolic threats include threats to the in-group’s morals, values, culture, and beliefs. The belief that a valued group’s perspectives are superior can lead to an ethnocentrism, which produces hostility toward the out-group (Stephan et al., 1999). Intergroup anxiety refers to the anxiety one would feel in interacting with another group or a group member. And negative stereotype threat includes the beliefs and evaluative responses to a particular group or a group member. These threats have been shown to predict anti-immigrant sentiment (Stephan et al., 1999). In a Dutch sample, Curseu et al. (2007) found negative stereotypes mediated the relationship between intergroup anxiety, realistic threat, symbolic/cultural threat, and the degree of contact in predicting social distance.

In the present research, we focused on realistic and symbolic threats as predictors of immigrant attitudes, since both types of threats have been implicated in anti-immigrant attitudes (Murray & Marx, 2013; Stephan et al., 2005). For example, Pehrson, Gheorghiu, and Ireland (2012) found those with historical power (in this case Irish Protestants and unionists) were driven by cultural threat, which in turn predicted prejudice toward minority ethnic groups and migrant workers. Wright and Citrin (2011) demonstrated that when presented with negative or positive information regarding cultural or economic impacts of immigration, negative information had more of an impact. This effect was stronger when people focused on information regarding cultural impacts, as opposed to economic impacts.

Moreover, using a multinational, European sample, Kauff and Wagner (2012) demonstrated that diversity beliefs (i.e., the desire to include diverse populations) predicted behavioral intentions toward immigrants; however, realistic threat mediated this relationship. In particular, the less one values diversity, the more realistic threat is perceived, and this threat decreases positive behavioral intentions toward immigrants.

In the United States, nearly 33% of non-Hispanics erroneously believe the majority of Latinos are “illegal” immigrants (Lilley, 2012). Lu and Nicholson-Crotty (2010) found European Americans’ negative Hispanic stereotypes were predictive of anti-immigration attitudes, but this was mediated by other threat-inducing issues (i.e., economic loss, crime rates, job loss, and change in U.S. demographics). Likewise, with Canadian samples, Costello and Hodson (2011) demonstrated the introduction of threat (realistic and cultural threat alone or in combination) produced less willingness to assist immigrants when social dominance orientation was high, compared to when no threat was indicated.

Based on the findings that patriotism and threat can each influence perceptions of immigrants and immigration, we predicted that patriotism may engender perceived threat, and this connection between patriotism and threat will predict anti-immigrant attitudes. More specifically, we predicted that blind patriots may perceive both realistic and symbolic threat, and this threat will influence blind patriots' anti-immigration attitudes. We further hypothesized that constructive patriots, who wish their country to become the best it can be, may not perceive threat, and hence, those high in constructive patriotism would be lower in anti-immigration attitudes.

Ethnic differences

The link between patriotism, threat, and immigration attitudes may show differences between U.S. Whites and Latinos. For example, prior studies have indicated that Latinos and Whites hold similarly high, patriotic attitudes towards the United States (de la Garza, Falcon, & Garcia, 1996; Gershon & Pantoja, 2011). However, patriotism (as well as ethnic identification, diversity preferences, and preferences for decreasing immigration) has been predictive of support for English-only laws by Whites but not by Latinos (Gershon & Pantoja, 2011). Whites are considered the quintessential American (Devos & Banaji, 2005) and are considered more American than Latinos (Huyhn, Devos, & Altman, 2015), giving Whites an incentive to prefer an unchanging society and static social demographic compared to Latinos. In contrast, Latinos have consistently challenged the existing nature of the U. S. (Telles & Ortiz, 2009), although Latinos engage in national activities and events that demonstrate love of nation, such as political engagement (Sarlin, 2014), judiciary membership (Wheeler, 2009), and military commitments (Sanchez, 2013).

Latinos hold slightly more positive attitudes toward immigration issues (Lopez & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013; Lopez, Taylor, Funk, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Oates, 2013), compared to Whites. Latinos' historical experience with immigration (Haney Lopez, 2006) and with immigrants (Pedraza & Rumbaut, 1996) signals more positive attitudes towards U.S. immigration (Krogstad, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2014b). Consequently, Latinos should experience less threat from immigrants and less anti-immigration attitude.

Research hypotheses

We compared Whites with a Latino sample to determine if the predictive relationship differs between the two groups (e.g., blind patriotism as a predictor of threat and immigration attitudes) and if Whites hold more negative immigrant attitudes in general. For Whites, we predicted that higher scores on blind patriotism (i.e., wanting your country to remain just as it is) would be predictive of anti-immigration attitudes, as found in prior research (Spry & Hornsey, 2007). Moreover, the relationship between blind patriotism and immigration attitudes would be mediated by realistic and symbolic threat. Those who love their country just as it is will experience threat (both realistic and symbolic) with the possibility of change that immigration effects, and this threat will predict higher anti-immigration attitudes.

In contrast, Whites with constructive notions of patriotism (i.e., wanting your country to change and improve) would adhere to lower anti-immigration attitudes in general, because the more one is a constructive patriot, the less one would experience threat. Thus, constructive patriotism may predict anti-immigration attitudes (the more one is a constructive patriot, the less one is anti-immigration), but threat would not mediate this relationship.

Given the history of race relations in the United States, we anticipated Whites would score higher on blind patriotism compared to Latinos, and Latinos would hold higher constructive patriotism beliefs compared to Whites. Latinos have been engaged in active efforts to challenge the social structure of the United States, and this signals that constructive patriotism may be higher for Latinos. Furthermore, Whites would hold more negative immigration attitudes in general compared

to Latinos, since Whites would be more threatened than Latinos (Doherty, Tyson, & Weisel, 2015). Thus, Whites should report higher threat levels.

Latinos' lower blind patriotism should eliminate the relationship with threat, and hence with anti-immigration attitudes. However, Latinos' higher constructive patriotism may still be predictive of anti-immigration attitudes (the higher the constructive patriotism, the lower the anti-immigration attitudes), but as with Whites, they would not experience realistic and symbolic threat.

Methods

Participants

Four hundred and ninety eight participants (females = 337, males = 161) volunteered for partial credit as part of an introductory psychology course. The sample consisted of 368 non-Hispanic Whites and 50 who identified as Hispanic/Latino. Due to small sample size, non-Hispanic Blacks (26), American Indians (2), Asian/Pacific Islanders (37), and 15 who identified as Other were excluded from analyses. The final sample consisted of 418 participants (Females = 284, *M* age = 21 years, ranging from 17 to 42, *M* years of residency in the state = 17, U. S. citizenship status *n* = 418).

Procedures and materials

After linking to the research study, participants read a consent form and provided assent by clicking an assent icon or exiting the Web site. Next, participants completed demographic measures (age, ethnicity, and sex) and a series of scales on patriotism, threat, and immigration attitudes. The order of scale completion was randomized to avoid biased responding. To measure patriotism, a *Blind and Constructive Patriotism Scale* (Schatz et al., 1999) was used. Items 1–12 measured blind patriotism (BP), which is associated with uncritical support of one's country. Items such as *People who do not wholeheartedly support America should live somewhere else*, and *The United States is virtually always right* were included. Items 14–19 measured constructive patriotism (CP), which has been found to be associated with questioning national practices and openness to positive change. Some of the items were *People should work hard to move this country in a positive direction* and *If I criticize the United States, I do so out of love for my country*.

Participants completed the *Realistic Threat Scale* and *Symbolic Threat Scale*. As part of integrated threat theory, Stephan et al. (1999) developed a scale to measure various threat components. The *Realistic Threat Scale* (RT) measures perceptions of threat and has been shown to be implicated in attitudes toward immigrants. It is composed of seven items, with items rated on a Likert-type scale. Characteristic items included *Immigration is undermining American culture* and *The values and beliefs of immigrants regarding work are basically quite similar to those of most Americans*. In addition, the *Symbolic Threat Scale* (ST) was also used (Stephan et al., 1999). This scale has been shown to predict anti-immigrant attitudes as a result of a perceived threat to the in-group's morals, values, and beliefs. This scale is composed of eight items, such as *Social services have become less available to Americans because of immigration* and *The quality of social services available to Americans has remained the same, despite immigration*.

The *Attitudes Toward Immigration Scale* (ATIS) was also included (Hovey, Rojas, Kain, & Magana, 2000). The 10-item scale has been found to be a good measure for predicting attitudes for a variety of social indices (e.g., age, ethnicity, employment type, etc.). Five items are positive concerning immigration, and five items are negative. Positive items were reverse-scored to provide an overall anti-immigration attitude. Examples of this scale included *One of the good things about America is that it can be the land of opportunity for many people* and *America should take care of Americans first*.

All items (except the demographic form) were rated on a Likert-type rating scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Results were analyzed and collated using SPSS 22. Linear Regressions were used to determine a relationship between blind patriotism and perceived threat (both realistic and symbolic), as well as between constructive patriotism and perceived threat (again both realistic and symbolic). Multiple regressions were used in order to predict positive and negative immigration attitudes, using blind patriotism, constructive patriotism, and perceived threat measures as predictors.

Results

A multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to determine differences between Latinos and Whites for BP, CP, RT, ST, and ATIS, as shown in Table 1. The multivariate test was significant, *Wilk's Lambda* $F(5, 412) = 12.67, p < .001, \alpha^2 = .13$. The differences between Latinos and Whites for BP, $F(1, 416) = 5.43, p < .02, \alpha^2 = .01$, RT $F(1, 416) = 50.27, p < .001, \alpha^2 = .11$, ST, $F(1, 416) = 10.36, p < .001, \alpha^2 = .02$, and ATIS, $F(1, 416) = 36.65, p < .001, \alpha^2 = .08$, were significant. The difference between Latinos and Whites for CP was not significant, $p = .40$. Whites reported higher BP, RT, ST, and ATIS compared to Latinos, but CP was not different between the two groups.

The hypothesized difference in Latinos' and Whites' perception of threat and their attitudes toward immigrants was tested with mediation analyses. Although the sample size for the Latino group was small ($n = 50$), previous research suggests that when conducting a mediation analysis, a bootstrapping method provides sufficient power for samples as small as 20 to 80 participants (Hayes, 2013; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Using Preacher and Hayes (2008) SPSS Macro for Multiple Mediation models, the hypothesis that blind patriotism and constructive patriotism would predict attitudes toward immigrants mediated through symbolic and realistic threat was tested for Latinos and Whites.

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to assess each component of the proposed mediation model. First, as shown in Figure 1, for Whites it was found that blind patriotism was positively associated with attitudes toward immigration, $\beta = .43; t(364) = 13.26, p < .001$. Blind patriotism also predicted realistic threat, $\beta = .35; t(364) = 11.53, p < .001$, and symbolic threat, $\beta = .34; t(364) = 13.45, p < .001$. Attitudes toward immigrants was predicted by both realistic threat, $\beta = .41; t(364) = 11.30, p < .001$, and symbolic threat, $\beta = .61; t(364) = 9.27, p < .001$, for White participants. Lastly, indirect effects were tested, using a bootstrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), with a confidence interval of 95% with 5000 bootstrapping sample, $\beta = .08; t(364) = 3.07, p = .002, CI = .30$ to $.41$. Since the path from blind patriotism to attitudes toward immigrants continued to be significant, the results suggest that only partial mediation was achieved (see Figure 1).

Next, models conducted for the White sample examined the indirect effect of constructive patriotism on attitudes toward immigrants through realistic threat or symbolic threat. Results indicated that for Whites, constructive patriotism was negatively associated with attitudes towards immigration, $\beta = -.59; t(364) = -6.82, p < .001$. Furthermore, constructive patriotism was found to predict symbolic threat, $\beta = -.32; t(364) = -4.62, p < .001$, and symbolic threat was positively associated with attitudes toward immigrants, $\beta = .64, t(366) = 12.82, p < .001$. In addition, findings indicate that, for White participants, constructive patriotism was also negatively associated with

Table 1. Mean scores for patriotism, threat, and anti-immigrant attitude as a function of race group.

Measure	Race Group						<i>p</i>
	Latino			White			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% CI	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	95% CI	
BP	36.06	1.68	(32.76, 39.36)	40.23	.62	(39.02, 41.45)	.02
CP	39.74	.74	(38.29, 41.12)	39.08	.27	(38.55, 39.62)	.40
RT	20.64	1.16	(18.37, 22.91)	29.37	.43	(28.53, 30.21)	.001
ST	23.10	.98	(21.17, 25.03)	26.46	.36	(25.75, 27.17)	.001
ATIS	25.44	1.26	(22.96, 27.92)	33.59	.47	(32.67, 34.50)	.001

Note. BP = Blind Patriotism, CP = Constructive Patriotism, RT = Realistic Threat, ST = Symbolic Threat, and ATIS = Anti-Immigration Scale.

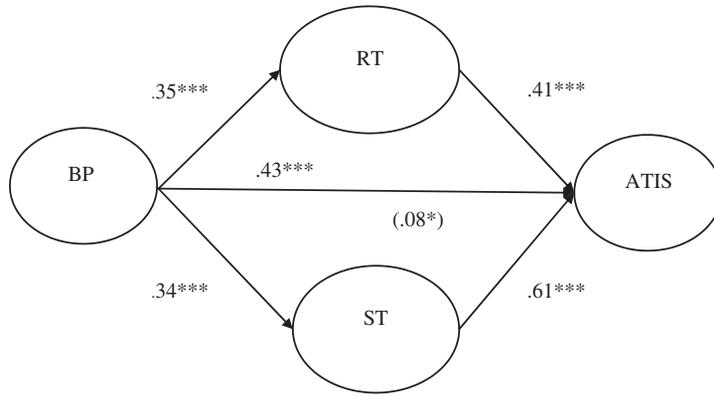


Figure 1. Indirect effects of blind patriotism (BP) on anti-immigrant attitude through realistic and symbolic threat for Whites. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

realistic threat, $\beta = -.37$; $t(366) = -4.55$, $p < .001$. Further, realistic threat positively predicted attitudes towards immigrants for White participants, $\beta = .42$; $t(366) = 9.67$, $p < .001$. Using a bootstrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), with a confidence interval of 95% with 5000 bootstrapping sample, $\beta = -.23$; CI = $-.51$ to $-.21$. However, only partial mediation was achieved, $\beta = -.23$; $t(366) = -4.71$, $p < .001$ (see Figure 2).

The next portion of our analyses examined the same models through the perspective of Latinos, who historically may have very different immigration notions and experiences. First, we examined if blind patriotism would predict attitudes towards immigrants mediated through symbolic and realistic threat differently for Latinos. The direct effect of blind patriotism on attitudes towards immigrants was significant, $\beta = .28$; $t(46) = 2.88$, $p < .01$. Blind patriotism also predicted realistic threat, $\beta = .28$; $t(46) = 2.70$, $p < .01$, as well as symbolic threat, $\beta = .28$; $t(46) = 4.42$, $p < .001$. Realistic threat predicted attitudes towards immigrants, $\beta = .68$; $t(46) = 7.35$, $p < .001$, but symbolic threat did not. When using a bootstrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), with a confidence interval of 95% and 5000 bootstrapping samples indicate that there is also a full mediation effect for Latino participants from blind patriotism on realistic threat to negative attitudes towards immigrants, $\beta = .06$, $t(46) = .72$, $p = .47$; CI = $.04$ to $.42$ (see Figure 3).

Finally, we examined the same model for constructive patriotism on attitudes toward immigrants through symbolic threat and realistic threat for the Latino sample. Results suggest that this model

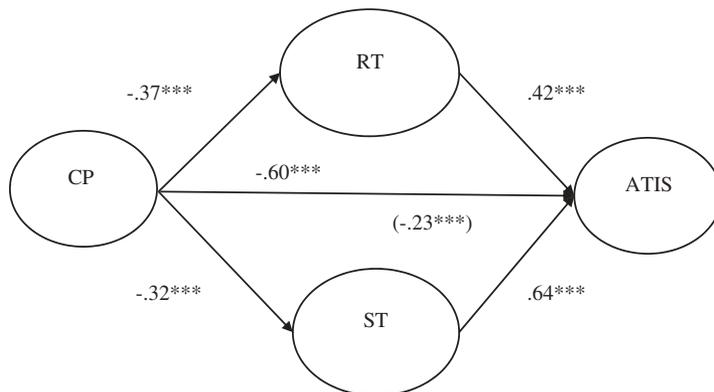


Figure 2. Indirect effects of constructive patriotism (CP) on attitudes towards immigrants through realistic and symbolic threat for Whites. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

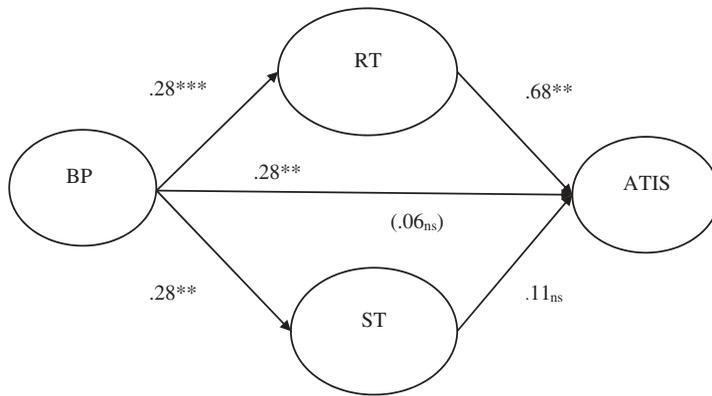


Figure 3. Indirect effects of blind patriotism (BP) on attitudes towards immigrants through realistic and symbolic threat for Latinos. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

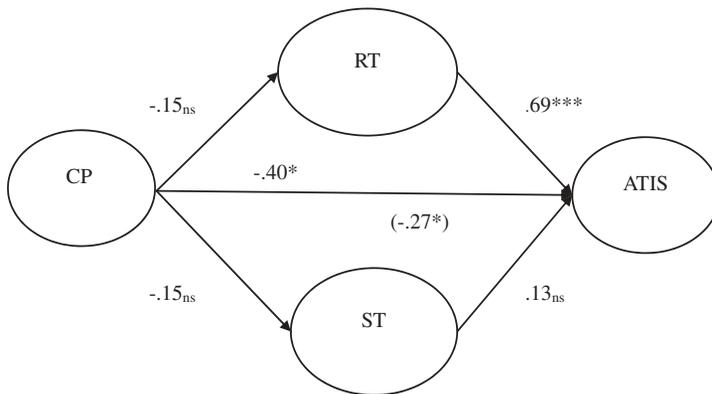


Figure 4. Indirect effects of constructive patriotism (CP) on attitudes towards immigrants through realistic and symbolic threat for Latinos. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

was not significant, $\beta = -.40$; $t(46) = -2.04$, $p = .04$, $CI = -.48$ to $.18$, as shown in Figure 4. Constructive patriotism for Latino participants did not predict either realistic or symbolic threat, but constructive patriotism was predictive of attitudes toward immigrants. Higher constructive patriotism by Latinos was indicative of lower anti-immigration attitudes.

Discussion

As predicted, Whites were more likely to adhere to blind patriotism, compared to Latinos. Nevertheless, for both a White and Latino sample, blind patriotism predicts greater realistic and symbolic threat, and these forms of threat partially mediated the relationship between blind patriotism and anti-immigration attitudes. For both groups, those with high scores on blind patriotism perceived more threat and, in turn, that threat predicted higher anti-immigrant attitudes. These results were only partially consistent with hypotheses. For Whites, the partial mediation of threat for the relationship between blind patriotism and anti-immigration attitudes was expected. This supports the findings of both Spry and Hornsey (2007) and Stephan et al. (1999). However, we had not anticipated that Latinos' blind patriotism would predict immigration attitudes, or that such blind patriotism would produce threat, and this threat would partially mediate the relationship with immigration attitudes.

Although we had anticipated higher constructive patriotism for Latinos compared to Whites, there were no significant differences between the groups. In addition, Whites with high constructive patriotism perceived less threat, and hence held lower anti-immigrant attitudes. At the same time, perceived threat was still found to contribute significantly to negative beliefs about immigration. Constructive patriotism first directly predicted perceived threat, which in turn predicted positive beliefs about immigration. These results, then, partially supported our hypotheses. At the same time, we had not anticipated Latinos' constructive patriotism would predict immigration attitudes, but we correctly surmised that Latinos would not have threat as part of the relationship between constructive patriotism and immigration attitudes, and this was confirmed.

Previous studies have investigated the extent to which American ethnic groups (African, Asian, and White) are associated with being "American." Results have suggested that both ethnic minorities and White Americans agree that African and Asian American groups are associated less with the category "American" than are White Americans at both the implicit and explicit level (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Furthermore, Whites are considered more American than Asians or Latinos, particularly by Whites (Huyhn et al., 2015). Although, ethnic minority groups may categorize their White counterparts as more American, this is not indicative of their patriotism or love for country, as Blacks, Whites, and Hispanics have been found to hold strong patriotic sentiment (de la Garza et al., 1996; Flanagan, Syvertsen, Gill, Galloway, & Cumsille, 2009). Nevertheless, some findings indicate Whites hold higher patriotism than ethnic minorities (Pena & Sidanius, 2002; Sidanius et al., 1997). The results of this study align with previous studies that suggest some ethnic minorities hold similar attitudes as the dominant White population. Attempts to maintain status may motivate both Whites and Latinos to become blind patriots, and Latinos high in blind patriotism may identify more strongly as American than with their ethnic group. This remains to be examined.

While realistic and symbolic threat mediated the relationship between constructive patriotism and immigration attitudes for Whites, for Latinos threat was not a mediating factor in such attitudes. Thus, Latinos who are high in constructive patriotism may be motivated by an approval for increased diversity, which mitigates any threat. Certainly, ethnic minorities have been found to hold more approval for diversity than Whites (Cokley et al., 2010), and Latinos express less bias against other groups compared to Whites (Weaver, 2008). Future immigration policy approval may be driven by this difference in threat perspective between blind and constructive patriots.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was that the sample was limited to university students. However, younger people tend to be less supportive of stricter immigration policy (Pew Research Center, 2010). Consequently, the findings may be stronger with an older community-based sample.

Furthermore, the study was conducted online with electronic responding. Participants could have been distracted while completing the survey, or not paying attention to the directions and questions. However, Evans, Garcia, Garcia, and Baron (2003) found more honest responding on racial bias with electronic survey completion. Race bias has been a consistent component that has been linked to immigration preferences. Alba, Rumbaut, and Marotz (2005) found that Whites who over-estimated minorities in the United States also possessed the most negative immigration attitudes compared to those with less-inflated estimates. Perez (2011) noted that Blacks' implicit anti-Latino bias was weaker than Whites' implicit bias, and Black's implicit bias did not influence immigration policy preferences, compared to Whites. And Ha (2010) found geographic proximity had unique effects on different ethnic groups and the groups' immigration attitudes. For example, Whites living near Asian communities expressed less biased immigration attitudes, but Blacks living near Asian communities expressed more negative immigration views.

Latinos are at the forefront of notions about immigration. A large percentage of the non-Latino U.S. population believes most Latinos are immigrants—and unauthorized immigrants, as well (Lilley, 2012). Ayers et al. (2009) found European Americans with high anti-Latino bias and who lived in

close proximity to Latinos showed more negative immigration attitudes compared to those with less proximity and lower bias. Several studies have shown bias is greater against Latino immigrants compared to other ethnic groups (Aguirre, 2004; Short & Magana, 2002; Willis Esqueda, 2013). Given that immigration has a strong race component, we believe the findings here are an accurate representation of the relationship between patriotism, threat, and immigration attitudes. Nevertheless, we hope to examine how the introduction of immigrant race may modify the link between patriotism, threat, and immigration attitudes.

While blind patriots and constructive patriots may love their nation equally, it remains to be seen if the ethnic vision for the future of the nation is also the same. Hopkins (2010) found that demographics of a community only had effects on anti-immigrant attitudes under specific conditions. For example, attitudes became hostile when sudden demographic changes were made especially salient by national rhetoric that was anti-immigration in nature. Thus, the salience of demographic changes may signal threat to even constructive patriots, and they may respond to immigration like those with blind patriotism. Also, the White = American connection may be threatened (Devos & Banaji, 2005; Huyhn et al., 2015). Several states with voter identification laws or those with pending legislation (e.g., Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma) have also had significant increases in the Latina/o population (New York Times, 2011), and proposed changes in voting regulations may be a result of the patriotism to threat to anti-immigration link for Whites.

Another avenue for future consideration is the connection between cultural inertia, patriotism and threat. The concept of cultural inertia has been defined “. . . as the desire to avoid cultural change, or a change in trajectories, or conversely, desire cultural change once movement or change is already occurring” (Zárate, Shaw, Marquez, & Biagas, 2012, p. 635). In cultural inertia, high identification with a group and resistance to cultural change produce anti-immigrant attitudes (Zarate & Shaw, 2010). High identifiers view shifting cultural patterns as a threat and hence are less likely to favor cultural change. Thus, those who identify as dominant-culture “American” would likely be high in blind patriotism and may be inclined to experience cultural inertia. This possibility would further expand the understanding of anti-immigrant perspectives for those highly identified as “American” and those who view themselves as vulnerable to a changing status.

Conclusion

While the findings here are based on regressions and not on manipulated patriotism or threat, these findings lend information about the potential causes for ethnic differences in preferences in immigration policy. Immigration policy has been a contentious issue for both Whites and Latinos, and understanding the relationship among ideological and attitudinal perspectives remains an area of heightened importance.

While we did not measure preferences in social distance from immigrants, Curseu et al. (2007) advocate for increased focus on diversity training to reduce negative stereotypes about immigrants and improve relations between groups. Along with that focus, it remains to be determined if different social forces can serve to transform blind patriots into constructive ones and vice versa. With the continuing mass migrations of workers around the world, understanding the precursors to negative ideologies about immigrants remains imperative and timely.

Notes on contributors

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