DO ATTITUDES ABOUT IMMIGRATION PREDICT WILLINGNESS TO ADMIT INDIVIDUAL IMMIGRANTS?
A CROSS-NATIONAL TEST OF THE PERSON-POSITIVITY BIAS

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Abstract This paper demonstrates that citizens in seven advanced industrialized democracies generally oppose more open immigration policies, but stand ready to admit individual immigrants. Using an experimental design, we demonstrate the applicability of the "person-positivity bias" to immigration and investigate the effects of economic and cultural "deservingness" on evaluations of individual immigrants.

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Our results show that immigrants from professional backgrounds elicit higher levels of support than unskilled workers. The bias against unskilled workers is enlarged among immigrants accompanied by families. In comparison with occupational status and the number of family dependents, the target immigrant's cultural attributes—as measured by Middle Eastern nationality and Afrocentric appearance—prove relatively inconsequential as criteria for evaluating immigrants.

In October 1998, respondents in the American National Election study were asked whether the United States should increase or decrease legal immigration into the country: only 11 percent preferred more immigration, while more than six times as many felt immigration should be curtailed. One year later, pollsters asked whether six-year-old Elián González should be allowed to stay with his relatives in Miami or returned to his father in Cuba: 45 percent felt he should be allowed to stay, with the same number favoring his return. Although the Elián González case is hardly typical, it illustrates what we argue is a frequent gap between (a) the public's attitudes toward immigration in general; and (b) its willingness to admit specific immigrants.

In this paper, we investigate the divergence between opinions concerning immigration policy generally and opinions about individual immigrants. The vast majority of studies assessing public opinion on immigration explore the issue exclusively in terms of attitudes toward "immigrants." Survey respondents have been asked about their policy preferences (e.g., whether it should be more difficult to acquire citizenship); their beliefs about the social, economic, and cultural costs of immigration (e.g., whether immigrants are likely to take jobs from citizens); and their stereotypes of different immigrant groups (e.g., whether Hispanics or Arabs are violent). In each case, the attitude object is abstract and impersonal.

Our central thesis is that the collective or group level of analysis fails to do justice to the nuances of public opinion concerning immigration. In many immigrant-receiving nations, the probability of encountering an individual immigrant is non-trivial. We argue that individual immigrants are relevant attitude targets, and that ordinary citizens harbor very different sentiments about individual immigrants than they do about immigration more generally. Citizens in the industrialized democracies investigated here typically oppose more open immigration policies, and believe that immigration is bad for the country; but they stand ready and willing to admit individual immigrants, especially those who are deemed deserving based on economic grounds.

Individuating Information and the Person-Positivity Bias

A fundamental finding of social psychological research is that a specific individual elicits higher levels of positive affect than the social groups or categories he

represents. The lack of correspondence between group-level and individual-level attitudes was first demonstrated by LaPiere (1934). Having followed a Chinese couple across the United States to 251 different establishments, he showed that restaurants and motels were overwhelmingly willing to serve them, despite the fact that in surveys they expressed overwhelming anti-Chinese sentiment and near unequivocal refusal to allow Chinese guests in their establishment.

The LaPiere study has been replicated in laboratory experiments showing that individuals are regularly viewed more positively than the groups or categories they embody. Sears (1983) labeled this phenomenon the "person-positivity bias"; it has been documented in assessments of college professors (Sears 1983), public figures (Lau, Sears, and Centers 1979), politicians (Nilsson and Ekehammar 1987), and gender groupings (Miller and Felicio 1990). We are not aware of any work, however, that extends the argument to the domain of immigration.

What accounts for the gap between attitudes toward individuals and groups? Researchers initially explained the person-positivity bias as a byproduct of the similarity heuristic. Survey respondents or participants in an experiment feel closer to a fellow human being than an abstract grouping or concept; that is, Americans are fond of their own congressperson but despise Congress. "Personhood" was cited as the key attribute distinguishing individual- from group-level targets (Sears 1983, 235). More recently, however, the person-positivity bias has been traced to basic differences in information processing. Different "dual-process" models of impression formation determine the pathways by which we arrive at judgments of individuals and groups (for reviews, see Brewer [1988]; Fiske and Neuberg [1990]; Sherman, Beike, and Ryalls [1999]). The best known of these models posits a basic distinction between "memory-based" and "online" processes of judgment (Hastie and Park [1986]; for an extension to political cognition, see Lodge and Taber [2000]). When asked to evaluate a group-level target, perceivers retrieve from memory the more accessible attributes of the group (Stangor and Lange 1994, 364–66) and combine these attributes into an overall impression. Because negative attributes tend to be more salient and memorable (Ito et al. 1998; Baumeister et al. 2001; Rozin and Royzman 2001), the retrieval process biases the overall judgment negatively (Sherman, Beike, and Ryalls 1999). For an individual target, however, perceivers form an initial impression that they continually update as they encounter additional information about the target person. The vast majority of one's interpersonal encounters are cordial and pleasant; hence, the "running tally" concerning a specific individual is typically positive (Sherman, Beike, and Ryalls 1999, 215–17).

But it is not only the perceiver's reliance on online processing that leads to person positivity. Mere exposure to individuating information is sufficient to weaken the connections between the individual in question and the group(s) she represents (Krueger and Rothbart 1988; Hilton and Fein 1989). In effect, individuating information overrides stereotypes and other heuristics that might apply to individuals, encouraging the perceiver to form a judgment "on the

merits" (Locksley et al. 1980; Nisbett, Zukier, and Lemley 1981; Yzerbyt, Leyens, and Schadron 1997).[1] Exposure to individuating information is thus normatively beneficial; perceivers become less reliant on stereotypes and more sensitive to attributes of the person.

Note that while person-positivity hypotheses have not yet been applied to attitudes about immigration, there are some interesting parallels with the immigration and diversity literature on "contact theory," which states that contact with out-group members can reduce prejudice when contact occurs between people in a non-hierarchical and non-competitive setting. Prejudice is reduced in part because contact leads to a redefinition of the in-group to include formerly out-group members in one's own self-concept. The seminal work is Allport (1954), but the ensuing literature is vast, and there is no lack of evidence both supporting and refuting the positive effects of contact (Pettigrew 1998; Gaertner and Dovidio 2000; Oliver and Mendelberg 2000; Abrams, Hogg, and Marques 2005). It is notable that the contact hypothesis fits, roughly speaking, with the effects of person positivity outlined above. Contact shifts who we see as "others," just as accounts of person positivity stress the importance of an individual-level connection in overcoming more generalized attitudes about groups. Furthermore, consistent with recent work on the contact hypothesis and general attitudes toward immigration, the person-positivity bias may help us understand larger findings about how personal experiences with immigration moderates out-group hostility toward immigrants (McLaren 2003; Savelkoul et al. 2011).

Explaining Variation in Support for Individual Immigrants

The person-positivity bias posits that although the public may intensely oppose policies that facilitate immigration, they can be welcoming toward individual immigrants. But the same forces that motivate opposition to immigration at the societal level can also affect evaluations of individual immigrants. Prior work has focused on two distinct explanations for public opposition to immigration. In what might be termed the economic threat perspective, immigrants represent either an employment threat or a tax burden in the form of increased demand for social welfare benefits (Scheve and Slaughter 2001; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2006; Hanson, Scheve, and Slaughter 2009; Facchini, Mayda, and Mishra 2011).

First, the labor competition hypothesis suggests that workers in the host nation are more threatened by immigrants with similar rather than dissimilar skills. Previous tests of this hypothesis, mainly observational, have yielded

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1. There are certain conditions under which individuating information fails to dilute stereotypes, most notably when the perceiver's attention to information is reduced (see Gilbert and Hixon [1991]).

mixed results. There is limited evidence that when individuals are directly threatened by particular classes of immigrant workers, for example, computer programmers, they are less apt to support entry visas for these workers (Malhotra, Margalit, and Mo 2010). More generally, economists have cited the strengthened opposition to immigration among the ranks of less educated (and hence more threatened) citizens as circumstantial evidence in favor of the hypothesis (Mayda [2008]; Borjas [1999]; for an extension to public opinion on trade policy, see Scheve and Slaughter [2001]). On the other hand, there is considerable evidence that education is associated with greater support for all forms of immigration, that the educated are more tolerant of diversity, and that it is the sense of tolerance rather than perceptions of economic threat that mediate the relationship between education and policy preferences (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007). In the most direct repudiation of the competition hypothesis, Americans expressed an across-the-board preference for a "highly skilled" over "low-skilled" immigrant (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2010).

Second, support for immigrants may be affected by the perception that they are an economic drain. Increased social welfare and economic costs associated with the education and healthcare of immigrants' dependents are important catalysts of opposition to immigration (Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005; O'Rourke and Sinnott 2006; Mayda 2008). We test this "fiscal burden" hypothesis by varying the subject immigrant's family situation. Preserving the integrity of the family is a basic principle of immigration law; the decision to admit one individual is therefore equivalent to admitting several if the applicant has a spouse and children. On the grounds that they represent a smaller burden, single immigrants should be favored over those with families (we are not aware of any relevant data on this point).

The alternative explanation of opposition to immigration is the "cultural threat" hypothesis. This perspective suggests that salient attributes of immigrant groups, including their distinctive language and religion, make it likely that they are perceived as threats to the dominant culture of the nation, leading individuals to favor more stringent immigration policies (Burns and Gimpel 2000; Alba and Nee 2003; Sides and Citrin 2007). The theoretical contribution of this paper is to demonstrate that the economic and cultural threat explanations also apply to evaluations of individual immigrants.

The Seven-Nation Study

We report results below from a cross-national analysis of public opinion on immigration in seven industrialized nations—Australia, Canada, Japan, South Korea, Norway, the UK, and the United States. These countries exhibit significant variation in (a) the size of their immigrant populations (and the resulting diversity of their national cultures); and (b) the level of political conflict generated by this issue. The two are not mutually independent, of course—immigration

tends not to be salient when there are very few immigrants. At the same time, contestation over immigration is not necessarily high in the countries with a very large number of immigrants. There, immigration can be relatively accepted.

Where the size of the immigrant population is concerned, we include Japan and South Korea because both countries long have maintained strict restrictions on the acquisition of citizenship via naturalization and on the admission of temporary workers. Non-natives make up less than two percent of the Japanese and South Korean populations, and temporary workers are required to return to their homes when their work visas expire. Australia, Canada, and the United States are, on the other hand, countries built largely through immigration, with "melting pot" or "mosaic" conceptions of national identity. The immigration population in Canada and Australia is over 20 percent; in the United States, it stands at nearly 15 percent. Norway and the UK represent intermediate cases—large-scale immigration is a relatively recent development, and the size of their immigrant populations is around 10 percent.

Turning to the salience of immigration issues, Japan and South Korea again stand at one extreme—the political ramifications of immigration are minimal, and limited to occasions on which temporary workers either engage in criminal behavior or are subjected to economic exploitation by local businesses. Despite its relatively high level of immigration, Canada has thus far been relatively insulated from immigration-related conflicts, both because of a national culture that is, relatively speaking, more accepting of cultural diversity, and because the vast majority of immigrants enter legally.[2]

In the four remaining nations, immigration is the subject of acrimonious debate. It has been a perennial campaign issue in the United States since the early 1990s, with Republicans staking out a hard-line anti-immigration position (e.g., "self-deportation") and Democrats attempting to balance support for increased border security with token appeals to Hispanic voters. Immigration has also become politicized in Australia, where the 2010 campaign focused on the significant increase in the number of people attempting to enter the country as asylum seekers. Responding to media coverage and public opinion, the two major parties converged on a hard-line "intercept and detain" position (Garrett and Jackman 2010). In the UK, questions about immigrant integration and social cohesion have been particularly salient since the so-called race riots of 2001. More recently, elected officials have responded to public concerns that immigrants are displacing British workers by proposing a cap on the number of incoming immigrants. In the 2009 campaign, the Conservative Party accused the incumbent Labour government of having presided over large increases in immigration while Labour and the Conservatives both attacked the Liberal Democrats for proposing "amnesty" for undocumented immigrants. Finally, Norway represents an intermediate category of issue salience; immigration

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2. For a direct comparison of Canada and the United States using these survey data, see Harell et al. (2012).

has been on the agenda since the mid-1980s, and public opposition to immigration is on the rise in response to recent increases in the number of asylum seekers arriving from Asia and North Africa. The Progress Party, formed in 1973, advocates a strident anti-immigrant position, and today holds the second largest number of seats in the Norwegian Parliament.

Overall, we expect that cross-national differences in support for immigration in general and willingness to admit individual immigrants will reflect variation in official policy; public opinion will be most anti-immigrant in nations with the strongest restrictions on immigration (e.g., Japan and South Korea). We further anticipate that public opinion toward immigration and immigrants will be less supportive in countries where the issue polarizes political elites, that is, in countries where citizens are exposed to anti-immigration rhetoric.

SAMPLING FROM ONLINE PANELS

Our experiment manipulating the economic and cultural deservingness of individual immigrants was administered online in all seven countries. In six of the seven, we recruited participants from national online panels maintained by YouGov (or one of its affiliates). YouGov is an international market research and polling firm that has pioneered the development of web-based panels as instruments for social scientific research (for an overview of online research panels, see Vavreck and Iyengar [2011]). The company uses a matching methodology for delivering online samples that mirror target adult populations on key demographic attributes. In general terms, their approach mimics a random probability sample by taking as the population a large "pool" (panel) of respondents who have agreed to participate in Internet surveys conducted by the survey organization. To ensure that the respondents in the panel are as diverse as possible, they are recruited by multiple means, mostly through different forms of online advertising, but also by telephone-to-web and mail-to-web recruitment.

The sampling procedure for the study is discussed in some detail in the online appendix. Here, we note just that the experiment was administered between January and July 2010, depending on the country. The number of participants was typically 1,000, with the exception of Japan ($N = 4,100$) and the UK ($N = 2,750$).

Testing the Economic and Cultural Threat Hypotheses: The Vignette Design

We provided study participants a brief vignette (ten sentences, approximately 125 words) accompanied by a photograph of a prospective immigrant. A second vignette and photo were presented immediately after respondents answered questions about the first immigrant. Both prospective immigrants were described as young men seeking to obtain temporary employment in the host nation with the hope of eventually acquiring citizenship. After reading each vignette, participants answered a set of questions.

The vignettes manipulated several attributes of the target immigrant so that we might test a combination of economic threat and cultural conflict hypotheses. We manipulated perceived economic threat by varying the education and occupational standing of the subject immigrants. Half the participants encountered an immigrant with a high school education who had previously worked as a laborer (as either a construction worker or a gardener), while the rest evaluated a college graduate with professional work experience (in either engineering or information technology). This occupational skill manipulation allows us to investigate several ways in which the economic situation of immigrants might matter to person positivity.

Half of our respondents were told that the individual was unmarried, while the rest were informed that he was married with two young children and that "he would like to bring his young family to live with him and for them to become citizens." Our general expectation is that immigrants with families will elicit less public support, but especially when the breadwinner is relatively unskilled. A significant interaction between occupational and family status would point to concerns that the dependents of unskilled immigrants are likely candidates for welfare.

The remaining two manipulations addressed cultural rather than economic attributes of immigrants. There is considerable evidence that the greater the perceived dissimilarity of immigrant groups to the dominant group on linguistic, religious, and general cultural grounds, the more likely they are to be met with hostility (Citrin et al. 1997; Fetzer and Soper 2003; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, and Prior 2004; McLaren and Johnson 2007). We used nationality as a proxy for both differing degrees of familiarity with the immigrant's country and a sense of cultural contrast between the "source" and host nations. The two nationality groups represented in the design for each country corresponded to (1) a relatively familiar group that accounts for a significant share of the host nation's immigrant population;[3] and (2) a more culturally dissimilar group representing the Middle East (an immigrant from Kuwait).

The decision to use Kuwait as the source nation common to all countries was based on several considerations, most notably the importance of religion and religiosity as a signal of cultural dogmatism. A salient component of the Muslim stereotype is intensity of religious beliefs (Rowatt, Franklin, and Cotton 2005; Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2007), making it more likely that a

3. We designated Mexicans as the more familiar group for the United States; Sri Lankans as the more familiar group for Canada, Britain, Australia, Norway, and South Korea; and Brazilians as the more familiar group for Japan. (Brazilians are well represented in Japan, making up the second largest group of Japanese guest workers.) Hispanics are by far the largest group of immigrants in the United States; for most Americans, Mexicans are a relatively familiar cultural and nationality group. South Asians make up a large share of the immigrant population in the commonwealth nations of Canada, Britain, and Australia and are also well represented in Norway. (The cultural affinity for Asians is especially strong in Britain, given the colonial rule of the Indian subcontinent.)

Muslim immigrant will be perceived as less willing to accept or conform to the norms of the host nation. Of course, we also selected Middle Easterners as the more dissimilar group because of the events of September 11 and the widespread tendency to associate Islam with political extremism and willingness to engage in terrorist activity (Mamdani 2002; Nacos and Torres-Reyna 2007; Wike and Grim 2010). Our expectation, therefore, was that the non-Kuwaiti immigrant would elicit significantly greater support in all nations.

Our final manipulation was visual, rather than textual, and varied the attribute of Afrocentrism. Afrocentrism is generally defined as the presence of facial features representative of Black Africans, most notably a darker complexion, fuller lips, and a wider nose. Psychological research indicates that White and Black subjects can spontaneously and reliably judge faces according to the degree to which they display Afrocentric features (Golby et al. 2001; Blair et al. 2002).

More importantly, in majority White societies, people with Afrocentric features are stereotyped (Maddox and Gray 2002; Eberhardt et al. 2004; Dixon and Maddox 2005) and subject to racial prejudice.[4] A bias against people with Afrocentric features—most notably, darker complexion—extends to non-Western cultures (Iwawaki et al. 1978; Jha and Adelman 2009). Since our sample of countries includes five majority White nations, on balance we expected that immigrants with a more Eurocentric appearance would be favored over those with Afrocentric features.

Our manipulation of Afrocentric features was implemented in the photographs of the individual immigrants. First, we selected a photograph of four young males to represent each of the four nationality groups featured in the vignettes (Mexican, Kuwaiti, Sri Lankan, and Brazilian). All four faces were of "average" attractiveness. Next, we selected a stereotypical Afrocentric and Eurocentric young male face from a database of photographs that had been rated for stereotypicality, attractiveness, and age by American college students. The two images we selected were rated similarly on all three attributes.[5] Finally, we morphed each of the immigrants' faces with the stereotypical Afrocentric and Eurocentric face in the ratio of 60:40. In the Afrocentric

4. In the United States, although overt racial animus is largely extinct, it has been replaced by more subtle forms of prejudice, such as "symbolic racism" or "racial resentment," that include both hostility toward non-Whites and support for mainstream cultural values such as the work ethic and self-reliance (see Kinder and Sears [1981]; Kinder and Sanders [1996]; Feldman and Huddy [2005]).

5. The database of faces was compiled by Professor Jennifer Eberhardt of the Department of Psychology at Stanford University. It includes 100 European and 100 African American male faces. The faces were rated by a sample of American undergraduates on a 1 (low) to 7 (high) scale measuring perceived attractiveness and stereotypicality. The mean attractiveness ratings for the African American and European American faces used in our manipulations were 4.3 and 5.1, respectively; the stereotypicality ratings for these two groups were 3.7 and 4.6, respectively. Of course, the fact that the stereotypicality mean ratings are similar indicates that the faces were seen as dissimilar. (Respondents rated each as above the midpoint on African American or European American stereotypicality, respectively.)
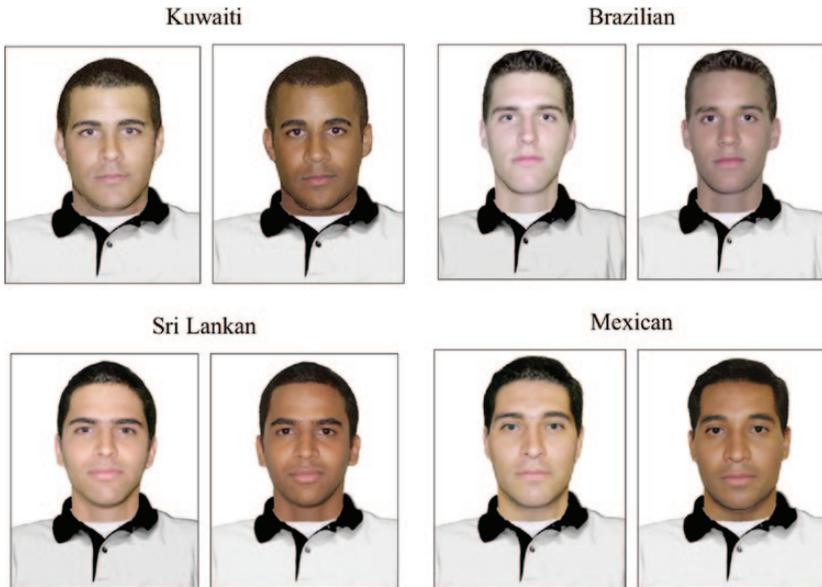
Figure 1. The Afrocentric Manipulation.

condition, for example, the image of the Kuwaiti immigrant shown to participants was a blend of the Kuwaiti (60 percent) and Afrocentric (40 percent) faces. Conversely, the image used in the Eurocentric condition was based on a similar combination of the original and Eurocentric images. The Afrocentrism manipulation for all four nationality groups is displayed in figure 1.[6]

ESTIMATION STRATEGY

We use regression analysis to estimate the effects of the various treatments deployed in our experiments. Letting i index subjects, c index countries, and j the two experimental trials, our model has the form

$$y_{ij} \sim N(X_i\beta + \alpha_i + \delta_c, \sigma_\epsilon^2)$$

$$\alpha_i \sim N(0, \sigma_\alpha^2);$$

6. In a different study, we provided the same eight photographs to a sample of Americans and asked them to evaluate the two faces according to complexion and attractiveness. Participants rated the faces on a scale ranging from "extremely dark" to "extremely light" and from "very attractive" to "very unattractive." The dark-light ratings differed significantly across the two levels of the Afrocentrism manipulation ($p < .01$), but there were no differences in the ratings of attractiveness between the more and less Afrocentric faces.

that is, we have a normal linear regression model augmented with (a) random effects α_i for subjects; and (b) fixed effects δ_c for each country. We utilize random effects over individuals so as to capture the dependence across the two trials per respondent, which would otherwise not be captured in the regression predictors X_i. The predictors include a generalized measure of *support for immigration* and a set of dummy variables for the various experimental treatments, *Middle East nationality*, *occupational status*, *children*, and *Afrocentrism*, as well as the interaction between the occupational status and children treatments (which tests the fiscal burden thesis). This analytic strategy is the regression counterpart of the classic repeated measures, between-subjects analysis of variance (see Hand and Taylor [1987]; Hand and Crowder [1996]). Since we include the measure of general support as a covariate, our specification estimates the causal contribution of the various experimental factors to the spread between individual-level and general immigration attitudes.[7] As noted earlier, we down-weight the UK and Japanese samples in this phase of the analysis so that each country contributes equally to the results (i.e., we equalize sample size across countries).

We do not report the results from the saturated model with the full set of twenty-five country interactions (five per experimental treatment effect). Instead we implemented a series of goodness-of-fit tests to arrive at a more parsimonious set of results. For each experimental treatment, we compared the fit of two models, one with the full set of country interactions, the other with none (i.e., a pooled effects model). We adjudicated between the models on the basis of the Bayesian Information Criteria (BIC), which trades off goodness-of-fit against degrees of freedom.[8] In the case of the family dependents and skin complexion manipulations, the pooled models won out. However, the BIC criterion ruled in favor of a fuller model in the case of the status and nationality effects. Even in these instances, however, the great majority of country x treatment interactions did not significantly enhance the fit of the model. It is this reduced-form model that we report later in table 1.

Results

We document the extent of person positivity by examining the effects of our experimental manipulations on respondents' willingness to admit individual immigrants after taking into account their preferences on immigration policy. We measured evaluations of the two individual immigrants described in the vignettes through three questions, asked immediately after participants read each vignette: (1) whether the individual should be granted a temporary work

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7. Although our dependent measure is calibrated on a 0–1 scale, it consists of twenty-six intervals and we estimate the model via maximum likelihood using the *R* package lme4 (Bates, Maechler, and Bolker 2011).

8. BIC is defined as negative two times the log-likelihood of the fitted model plus a penalty term defined as the log of the number of data points times the number of parameters estimated by the model.

Table 1. Best-Fitting Regression Model Predicting Immigrant Support

	Estimate	S.E.
Intercept	0.249	(0.006)
Support for Immigration	0.474	(0.008)
Japan	0.241	(0.010)
United States	0.169	(0.012)
Norway	0.075	(0.009)
Canada	0.075	(0.009)
Australia	0.045	(0.009)
South Korea	0.239	(0.012)
Second Candidate	−0.047	(0.002)
Middle Eastern Nationality	−0.010	(0.002)
Occupational Status	0.124	(0.006)
Children	−0.024	(0.003)
Occ. Status × Children	0.040	(0.004)
Japan × Supp. Immig.	−0.113	(0.018)
United States × Middle-Eastern	−0.056	(0.005)
United States × Status	−0.070	(0.015)
Japan × Status	−0.074	(0.011)
South Korea × Status	−0.065	(0.017)
σ_α	0.054	(0.232)
σ_ϵ	0.022	(0.147)
Log-likelihood	2069.543	
Deviance	−4139.085	
AIC	−4099.085	
BIC	−3935.317	
N	26,593	
Groups	13,318	

NOTE.—Maximum likelihood estimates, country-by-country linear regressions with subject-specific random effects.

σ_α: standard deviation of respondent-specific random effects

σ_ϵ: residual standard deviation

All coefficients significant at $p < .001$.

permit; (2) how long the work permit should extend, with options ranging from six months to three years; and (3) whether they would approve or deny the temporary worker's application for citizenship. Responses to these three questions were strongly correlated, and we averaged them to form an additive index of *support for individual immigrants*.[9]

9. The response options for the work permit and citizenship questions were "approve," "disapprove," and "can't say." We scored these responses as 1, 0, and .5, respectively. The resulting index of candidate approval ranges from 0 to 1. Cronbach's alpha was .78 for the items targeting the first candidate and .81 for the second.

At the policy or societal level, we asked respondents to indicate (1) their agreement or disagreement with the statement that their country was admitting too many immigrants; (2) their beliefs about the impact of immigration—favorable or unfavorable—on the country; (3) their agreement or disagreement with the statement that increased cultural diversity due to immigration was good for the country; and (4) their rating of the importance of illegal immigration as an important national problem. The items were strongly inter-correlated, and we rescored them on a 0–1 scale with zero indicating the most extreme opposition to immigration (a negative response on all five questions).[10] This measure of general *support for immigration* is our baseline for assessing the positivity bias in evaluations of individual immigrants. The average level of support for individual immigrants across the two trials within countries is displayed in figure 2. (Note that economic and cultural cues vary within each trial.) Overall approval is lowest (by a considerable margin) in the UK. At the other end of the distribution, Japan, South Korea, Canada, and the United States are the most welcoming nations, where clear majorities are willing to admit both candidates. Norway and Australia fall in between, with smaller margins between those approving and disapproving of the individual immigrants. The average percentage of respondents willing to grant citizenship, for instance, is 33 and 32 percent, respectively, in Norway and Australia.

Figure 2 shows that respondents in all countries are less favorably disposed toward the second candidate. The drop in approval for the second candidate is significant in five of the seven countries. Except for the cases of South Korea and Japan, the erosion of support for the candidate presented second is non-trivial, amounting to a difference of more than five percent. We surmise that the addition of a second candidate encourages respondents to think of him as a member of a group rather than an individual. As the number of immigrants increases, "personhood" becomes a less salient attribute to the perceiver. This pattern may indicate that the positivity bias is tempered by the size of the immigrant set; as the number of immigrants one is asked to evaluate increases, there are diminishing marginal returns of positivity.[11] Multiple cases of individual immigrants amount to a class of individuals, and respondents are likely to react to the later instances less favorably. Nonetheless, the level of approval for the second candidate in every nation exceeded .5.

We turn next to the multivariate analysis of support for individual immigrants (see table 1). First, note that the size of the country coefficients provides

10. Cronbach's alpha was .68. We also subjected the seven items comprising the individual and policy support indices to a principal components analysis with oblique rotation. In all countries, the analysis extracted two distinct components.

11. We do not mean to imply that the addition of the second candidate neutralizes the positivity bias. If anything, the percent of the pooled sample with a favorable impression of the second candidate (respondents with scores above .5 on the candidate approval measure) is 54, while the percent approving of immigration in general (respondents with scores above .5 on the policy measure) is 26.
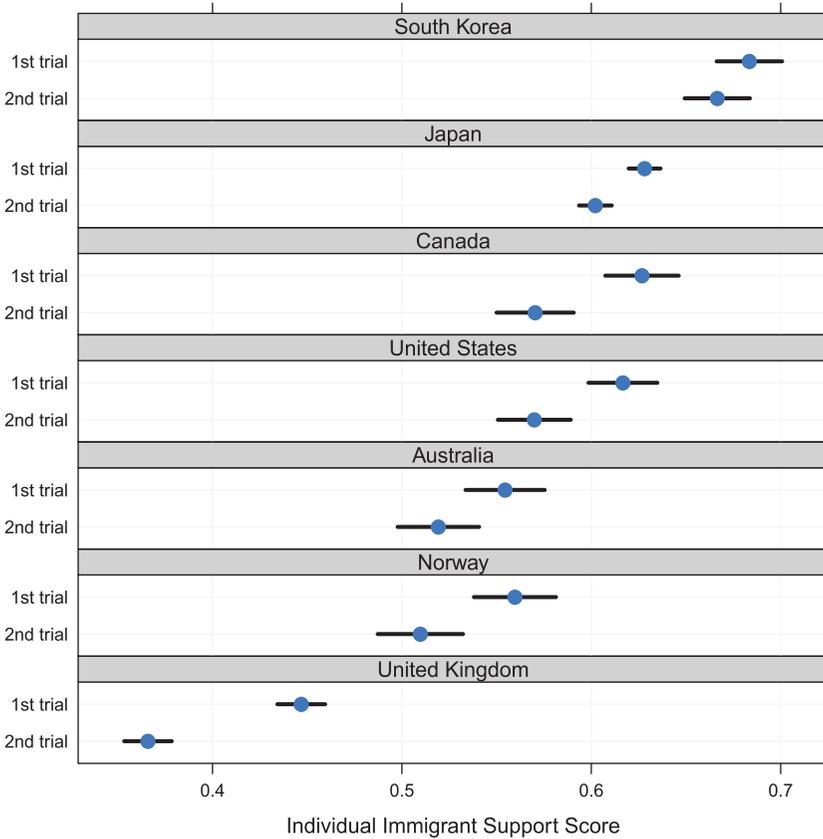
Figure 2. Cross-National Differences in Evaluations of Individual Immigrants. Plotted points are the observed, average values of the individual immigrant support score, by country, by trial. Horizontal lines cover 95-percent confidence intervals for each average score.

strong evidence of a positivity bias. The UK is the excluded nation, so person positivity there is captured in the intercept—at .249, it makes clear that approval of individual immigrants is markedly higher than is approval of immigrants generally. And evaluations of the individual candidates are even more positive than general attitudes in the six remaining nations. The fixed effects of country are especially pronounced for Japan, South Korea, and the United States. These countries display the highest level of relative positivity for individual immigrants. (Consider Japan, where approval for individuals is nearly .5 points higher than approval for groups, on a 0–1 scale.) Overall, however, all respondents express higher-than-expected approval for the individual immigrants, given their general sentiments about immigration.

Occupational status was the dominant predictor of person positivity. The baseline coefficient, representing the effect among UK respondents, shows that positivity for the individual immigrant increases by around .12 when the candidate is a professional. This substantial effect is weakened considerably in the United States, Japan, and South Korea. (The interactions between country and status were also negative in the case of the four other nations, but these interactions were insufficiently powerful to survive our model selection procedure.)

The full set of country by occupational status interactions (not presented here) shows that the British and Norwegians are most likely to base their evaluations on occupation, while the Americans, Japanese, and South Koreans are the least responsive to the occupational skills manipulation. The more accepting posture of Americans toward unskilled workers may reflect the weakness of social class distinctions in American culture. In the case of Japan and South Korea, where the population is aging and there is a severe shortage of young workers prepared to work in unskilled jobs, the higher level of support for the unskilled immigrant may stem from an awareness of this economic reality.

The striking across-the-board effect of job skills is inconsistent with the argument that a similarly skilled immigrant is likely to be viewed as a potential competitor in the job market. Recall that instead of a main effect of occupation, the employment threat hypothesis predicts an interaction between the manipulation and the respondent's occupation; professionals should be more welcoming of unskilled than skilled immigrants, with the opposite pattern holding for respondents working in unskilled positions. Unfortunately, the only countries for which we have precise data on respondents' occupation are the United States, the UK, South Korea, and Canada; in the remaining samples, we relied on education as a proxy. The interaction between a dichotomized version of the education variable (college graduates versus those with less formal education) and the occupation manipulation proved non-significant in all nations and did not survive our goodness-of-fit tests. In the case of British, American, South Korean, and Canadian respondents, for whom we have data on occupation, there was no visible tendency for respondents to express greater support for the immigrant when the immigrant's job skills diverged from their own. In all the above countries, both professionals and manual workers preferred the skilled over the unskilled immigrant, and professionals were generally more approving of immigrants than were manual workers.[12]

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12. Among professionals in the UK, the mean index of approval was 0.35 and 0.56 for the unskilled and skilled immigrant, respectively. Among manual workers, the corresponding means were 0.25 and 0.41. In Canada, the corresponding means were 0.54 and 0.64 among professionals and 0.54 and 0.7 among manual workers. In the United States, the corresponding means were 0.55 and 0.65 among professionals and 0.49 and 0.67 among manual workers. In South Korea, the corresponding means were 0.62 and 0.72 among professionals and 0.65 and 0.67 among manual workers.

We next consider the effects of the family dependents manipulation. In keeping with the predictions of the fiscal burden hypothesis, the interaction between the occupation and family status manipulations was robust. Since the equation includes the interaction term as well as the separate effects of occupation and family status, the coefficient associated with the dependents manipulation shows the effects of this manipulation in the unskilled conditions, while the interaction coefficient captures the difference in the effects of the dependents manipulation between the skilled and unskilled conditions. For the unskilled, the presence of dependents is in fact a liability, reducing the level of approval by about two percent. For the skilled worker with a family, however, the level of approval increases by about four percent. This pattern is precisely what we would expect if the public in the receiving nation was concerned about the economic costs of absorbing an immigrant family.

We present the within-nation effects of the interaction in figure 3. In every country, the predicted level of approval for the low-status candidate decreases in the immigrant with dependents condition. Interestingly, the varying effect sizes across nations do not parallel the rate of taxation or generosity of welfare programs in this set of countries. Norwegians, who pay the highest taxes to finance their welfare state, are the least inclined to keep out potential recipients of welfare benefits. And Americans, whose tax burden is considerably lighter than that of most Europeans, are not the most neutral over the question of family size when assessing the unskilled immigrant.[13] We surmise that the presence of family members signifies more than the immigrant's ability to maintain financial self-sufficiency. First, in the case of a relatively well-paid immigrant, the presence of children may also convey cues about the likelihood that the family will assimilate into the culture of the host nation. Second, in some countries, disapproval of the single male immigrant may stem from stereotypes linking immigrants with crime.

All told, our manipulations of economic threat proved effective. By a very large margin, individuals preferred skilled to unskilled immigrants. Moreover, they further disapproved of the unskilled immigrant when he had a family to support. Both these effects suggest that beliefs about earnings and the ability to fend for oneself are important attributes underlying evaluations of immigrants. While the immigrant's financial independence was weighed heavily, respondents were generally unconcerned about the possibility that immigrants with similar skills may displace them in the job market.

We turn finally to our manipulations of cultural threat—skin complexion (Afrocentrism) and ethnicity. The visual cue proved entirely superfluous, both when the effect was pooled across countries and when observed within countries. Only in Norway were there faint traces of the predicted preference for

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13. Using OECD data from 2010, we compared the seven countries on the basis of two indicators—the share of GDP provided by taxes and the income tax rate for a family of four with earnings of 167 percent of the national average. Norway ranks first on both indicators, and the United States is either at or close to the bottom.
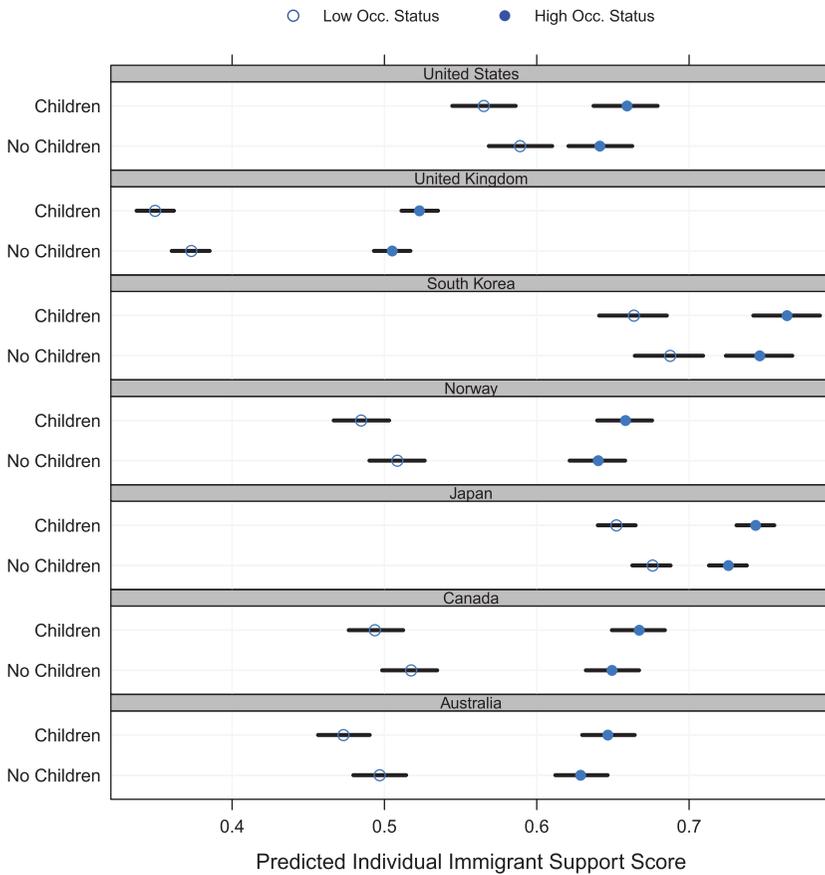
Figure 3. Interaction Effects of Occupational Status and Dependents Manipulations. Plotted points are predicted values of the individual immigrant support score, varying the high/low occupational status and children/no-children conditions, by country; the generalized immigrant support score is set at its country-specific mean, the trial indicator is set to the first trial, and we assume that the hypothetical, individual immigrant is not of Middle Eastern origin. Open/solid plotting symbols indicate low/high occupational status. Horizontal lines cover 95-percent confidence intervals around the predicted values.

Eurocentric over Afrocentric immigrants. Everywhere else, there were either no differences associated with Afrocentrism or a slight tendency to favor the relatively Afrocentric candidate.

Unlike physical appearance, nationality contributed significantly to evaluations of individual immigrants. Although the effects of the manipulation

were small—a coefficient of –.010 in table 1 (at least in comparison with the manipulations of occupational and family status)—the immigrant from Kuwait was typically viewed less favorably than his counterpart from Mexico, Sri Lanka, or Brazil. Of course, nationality is not the most reliable marker of religion, but we contend that the association between countries located in the Middle East and the Muslim religion is sufficiently strong to warrant the inference that respondents are averse to the Kuwaiti, at least in part because they believe him to be a Muslim. Our evidence in support of this claim is a manipulation check administered on a different sample of people who were provided the same vignettes and then asked to guess the religion of the candidates. More than two-thirds of this sample identified the Kuwaiti as Muslim.[14]

As expected, the effects of Middle Eastern nationality were most prominent in the United States. The United States x nationality interaction coefficient of –.056 in table 1 indicates that in relation to other nationalities, the effects of Middle Eastern nationality were enlarged by 54 percent in the United States. Although the United States is an outlier on hostility to Middle Easterners, there is not a single country in this set of nations where support for the Kuwaiti consistently exceeded support for the non-Kuwaiti. Thus, Middle Eastern immigrants generally suffer from a double burden; not only are they perceived as Muslim, but they are also less visible and familiar to the host population than other nationality groups such as Hispanics or Asians.

In general, our results suggest that there is no apparent relationship between the thrust of immigration policy, the size and rate of change in the immigrant population, and the level of support for individual immigrants. Japan and South Korea, countries with restrictive policies and a very low level of immigration, are characterized by extensive support for individual immigrants. Canada and Australia have the largest immigrant populations but display greater positivity than the UK.

The effects of the experimental manipulations also proved uniform across nations. Figure 4 shows the cross-national variation in the six parameters of interest, with the estimates from a pooled model also presented. Cross-national variation in the estimated effects was reasonably small. Only in a few cases were country-specific estimates of treatment effects warranted; thus, our preferred model for these data (presented earlier in table 1) included only a handful of country-by-attribute interaction terms.

Figure 4 shows that the experimental manipulation subject to the most cross-national variation is occupational status of the hypothetical immigrant.

14. These respondents were recruited from Mechanical Turk, which is maintained by Amazon.com. Among all respondents, 74 percent identified the Kuwaiti as a Muslim. (They were asked for their "best guess.") Among American respondents, the level recognizing the Kuwaiti as Muslim was slightly lower, at 72 percent.
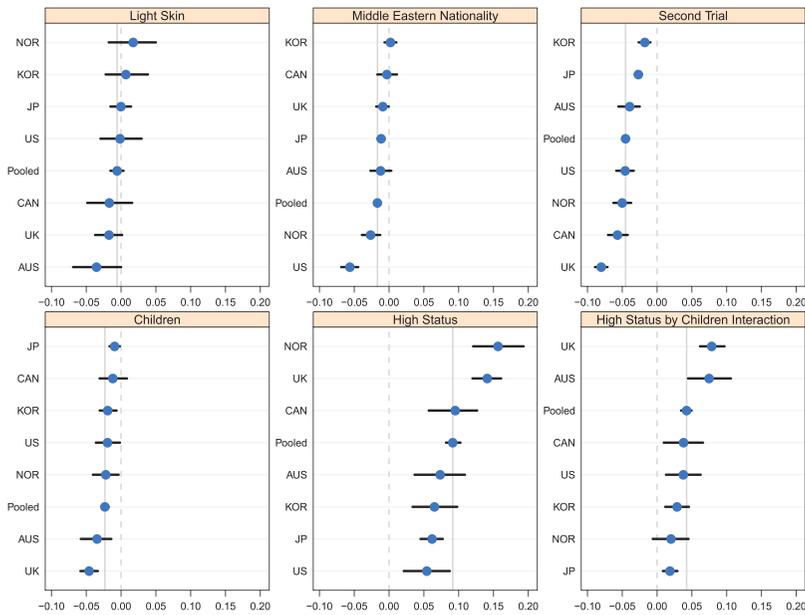
Figure 4. A Comparison of the Pooled and Within-Country Effects.
Plotted points are maximum likelihood estimates of the indicated regression parameters, by country or pooled across countries. Horizontal lines cover 95-percent confidence intervals; in some cases, these are so narrow as to be obscured by the plotted point. A dotted vertical line indicates zero; the solid vertical line indicates the pooled estimate.

This term picks up three country-specific interaction terms in our model, helping us span the considerable variation in the effects of this attribute. Averaged over Norway, Canada, Australia, and the UK, immigrants with a professional occupation pick up .13 units more support than immigrants without a professional occupation (on a 0–1 scale; $t = 18.7$); these effects are less than half as large in the United States (.05, $t = 3.7$), Japan (.05, $t = 5.5$), and South Korea (.06, $t = 3.8$).

In comparison with occupational status, the other manipulations exerted much weaker effects, except for Middle Eastern nationality in the United States, where the penalty imposed on Kuwaitis was considerable—almost a .06 reduction in willingness to admit. Overall, for this sample of countries, economic and cultural attributes exert uniform effects on evaluations of individual immigrants. Thus, the main variation across nations is in the mean level of positivity, with the UK lagging considerably behind.

One possible explanation for the distinctiveness of the UK—the country with the highest level of general opposition and lowest level of willingness

to admit individual immigrants—may be the proximity of this study to the 2010 election. The experiment was administered during the run-up to the May 6 election. As we have noted, immigration featured prominently during the campaign, with the Conservatives advocating, in the recent words of Prime Minister David Cameron, "good immigration, not mass immigration." The low level of approval for the individual immigrants in the UK may reflect the effects of recent exposure to elite rhetoric (Hopkins 2010).[15]

Discussion

Negative sentiments for immigration in general do not necessarily carry over to hostility toward individual immigrants. In every nation we surveyed, people were willing to admit immigrants as temporary workers—and even citizens—at a rate considerably higher than expected, given their levels of support for immigration generally. Exposure to individuating information makes it possible for people to disassociate individual immigrants from the generic category or policy area that they represent. Attitudes toward individual immigrants are characterized by a person-positivity bias.

This study also demonstrates that individuals in all immigrant-receiving nations, no matter the size of their immigrant population or the political salience of the issue, evaluate individual immigrants mainly on their economic rather than cultural "merits." The most important attribute is job skills, as signaled by occupational status and education. The ability of the immigrant to support a family is also important; individuals are less willing to support unskilled immigrants when they have to support a family. The combined effect size of the job skills and family dependents manipulations—amounting to some 15 percent of the range of the dependent measure—is more than four times the *combined* effects of nationality and Afrocentrism. The ability to earn a substantial income and stay off the welfare rolls outweighs concerns over cultural distinctiveness and ability to assimilate. Our results thus suggest that opinions concerning immigration policy and individual immigrants are driven by differing concerns.

Even though occupational status was the overwhelming predictor of evaluations of individual immigrants, our efforts to tease out other manifestations of economic threat failed. The prospective immigrant's potential as a job market competitor did not factor into willingness to admit. That job market competition, albeit crudely measured, had no effect during a period of intense global economic insecurity is especially remarkable since this study was conducted in the aftermath of the 2008 global recession.

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15. The Australian study was also administered in the weeks before the 2010 Australian election, but the debate in that country focused more narrowly on asylum seekers rather than legal immigrants.

Nationality was the only marker of cultural familiarity to move assessments of individual immigrants. In each country, the non-Kuwaiti immigrant represented a relatively visible nationality group in the host nation. At least indirectly, our results imply that immigrants representing individuals from well-known nationality groups elicit the same reaction as incumbent politicians; they are both more recognizable and likable.

Despite the lack of support for the employment threat hypothesis, our results demonstrate that job skills and earnings potential outweigh cultural attributes as a basis for evaluating immigrants. This result is anomalous when placed in the context of findings that cultural cues are at the forefront of citizens' preferences concerning immigration policy. One possible explanation is that our cultural threat manipulation was weakened because we failed to include an immigrant representing the dominant cultural group. The nationality manipulation may have exerted stronger effects had we presented respondents in the predominantly White societies with an immigrant from Europe.

More generally, we suspect that economic reasoning plays little role in the policy domain because it imposes excessive cognitive demands on the citizen. Inferring the consequences of increased immigration for the state of the national economy requires information about labor market trends and the distribution of employment skills within the immigrant population. Lacking expertise on these matters, citizens fall back on values and cultural stereotypes when assessing immigration as a policy question.

What is it about individual immigrants as attitude objects that encourages the use of an economic rather than cultural appraisal? For one thing, the economic credentials of individuals are easily understood. No expertise is required to infer that an engineer will earn a higher income than a laborer. Moreover, economic credentials are seen as a matter of purely individual rather than situational responsibility. Nationality and physical appearance, on the other hand, are attributes that are less subject to an individual's control. It is therefore more intuitive to evaluate an individual rather than a collectivity or abstract public policy domain on the basis of economic considerations.

To sum up, our findings reveal a lack of correspondence between evaluations of individual immigrants and immigration policy preferences. First, there is considerably more support for admitting individual immigrants than there is for open immigration policies. Second, while opposition to increased immigration at the societal level is fueled by beliefs about the cultural practices of immigrant groups, individual immigrants are judged primarily on the basis of their economic credentials. Note that these findings may have important implications for immigration policy. Survey items focused on societal-level attitudes suggest that policymakers must concern themselves first and foremost with the cultural implications of immigration, but our individual-level results suggest that governments and advocacy groups may do well to focus less on where immigrants come from than their labor market potential. This is clearly an avenue for future research. For the present, our results indicate that

researchers must consider the state of public opinion at both the societal and individual levels of analysis.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are freely available online at http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/.

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