From perceptions to hostilities
An experimental study of realistic and symbolic threats

Aron Woonink
Supervised by: Nina von Uexküll

Master’s thesis
Department of Peace and Conflict Research
Uppsala University
VT2018
Word count: 20861
Abstract

In this thesis, I will argue that the role different types of perceived threat play is fundamental for how people can become more hostile or violent. Scholars have previously studied how threat perceptions can lead to outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes. Sometimes they have distinguished between realistic threats, those pertaining to wellbeing, safety and economic resources, and symbolic threats, related to culture, identity and values. Yet, despite previous research, systematic experimental evidence is scarce. Therefore, this thesis has attempted to answer the question of how realistic and symbolic threat perceptions affect outgroup hostilities through a novel survey-experimental design (n = 97) making use of Amazon’s MTurk for recruitment. It found that those exposed to a realistically framed threat exhibit more pragmatist attitudes, whereas those exposed to a symbolically framed threat leaned towards more vicious responses, although these latter results lacked statistical significance. This thesis found no difference in violent attitudes for these two types of perceived threat. These findings are important as they teach us how people can become more hostile, and how we can be aware of how actors, such as politicians, can use threat framing to achieve certain objectives.

Keywords

Threat perceptions, realistic threat, symbolic threat, outgroup hostilities, violent attitudes, experimental design
Acknowledgements

This thesis, the culmination of two wonderful years in Sweden, would not have come into existence without the help of countless others. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Nina von Uexküll, who always provided useful, direct and organized feedback on all of my ideas and thoughts. I would also like to thank Linus Hagström, my supervisor during my internship at the Swedish Defence University, who bolstered my eye for critical research and provided me with some sharp initial comments on this project. I would also like to express my appreciation for everyone at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, who have really made me feel at home over the past two years.

This thesis would not have become what it is if it weren’t for my friends and fellow students in the program. For all sorts of comments I would particularly like to express my gratitude to Marcus, Remco, Eleonora, Suna, Therese, Ylva and Suzanne. For helping me with the pilot, which made the experiment a lot better, I convey my thanks to Francisco and Alessandro from our class, and Koen and Bart from back home for some outsider’s feedback on this. I would also like to thank my mom and dad, who have always encouraged and supported me in my choices, no matter what. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my dear Bente, not only for helping me a lot with thinking through this thesis, but also for being there for me in times I needed it the most.
# Table of contents

Abstract 2  
Acknowledgements 3  

1. Introduction 6  

2. Literature review 9  
2.1 Parochial altruism and intergroup relations 9  
2.2 The consequences of threat 10  
2.3 Realistic and symbolic threat 11  
2.4 Immigration and threat 12  
2.5 The research gap: hostility differentiation and causality 13  

3. Theoretical framework 15  
3.1 Concepts 15  
  3.1.1 Intergroup threat theory 15  
  3.1.2 Perceived realistic and symbolic threat 15  
  3.1.3 The subjectivity of threat: constructions and perceptions 17  
  3.1.4 Outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes 18  
3.2 The causal mechanism and hypotheses 19  
  3.2.1 From threat to outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes 19  
  3.2.2 From realistic and symbolic threat to outgroup hostility and violent attitudes 23  

4. Research design 28  
4.1 Experimental design 28  
  4.1.1 Why an experiment? 28  
  4.1.2 The procedure 29  
4.2 Sampling 30  
  4.2.1 Method of recruitment 30  
  4.2.2 Generalizability, random sampling and random assignment 31  
4.3 Operationalization and the survey 32  
  4.3.1 Independent and dependent variables 32  
  4.3.2 The survey questions 33  
  4.3.3 Validity of the variables 35  
4.4 The data analysis 35  
4.5 Limitations and ethics 36  
  4.5.1 Causality, generalizability, and interpretation 36  
  4.5.2 Ethical considerations 37  

5. Analysis 40  
5.1 Descriptives 40  
5.2 In depth analysis 42  
  5.2.1 Test of design 43  
  5.2.2 Dependent variable 1: outgroup hostilities 43  
  5.2.3 Dependent variable 2: violent attitudes 47
5.3 Summary

6. Discussion and conclusion
6.1 Discussion of the findings and this study’s limitations
6.2 Concluding remarks and avenues for further research

Bibliography

Appendices
Appendix A: Informed consent form
Appendix B: Questions on demographics
Appendix C: Treatment (independent variable)
Appendix D: Survey instrument (dependent variable)
Appendix E: Test of design and Worker ID
Appendix F: Dehoaxing and desensitization

List of figures and tables
Figure 3.1 Group-level and individual-level threats
Figure 3.2 Types of outgroup hostilities
Figure 3.3 The general causal mechanism from perceived threat to outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes
Figure 3.4 The causal mechanism from perceived realistic threat to pragmatism and ingroup favoritism
Figure 3.5 The causal mechanism from perceived symbolic threat to moral exclusion and decreased empathy
Figure 3.6 The causal mechanism from perceived realistic and symbolic threat to prejudice
Figure 3.7 The causal mechanism from perceived realistic and symbolic threat to violent attitudes, possibly mediated through outgroup hostilities
Figure 4.1 The procedure of the experiment
Figure 4.2 The survey questions operationalized
Figure 5.1 Distribution of treatment along gender
Figure 5.2 Level of education
Figure 5.3 Spatial distribution of respondents
Table 5.1 Frequency table of the respondents’ answers
Table 5.2 Test of design
Table 5.3 Uncollapsed set (outgroup hostilities)
Table 5.4 Collapsed set (outgroup hostilities)
Table 5.5 Uncollapsed set (violent attitudes)
Table 5.6 Collapsed set (violent attitudes)
1. Introduction

Believe it or not: despite all the abhorrences and violence we can see on the news every day, humans are a fundamentally social species. We live in groups, sometimes clearly and at other times unclearly demarcated, and these group identities shape most of what we do. Think of being a fanatic Liverpool fan, a drummer in a fanfare orchestra or an ethnic Hutu. Inherent to the concept of groups, is that some people are members, or included, whereas others are not members, or excluded. Often, but not necessarily, this causes tensions between groups, leading to antagonistic relations or even violence, be it with the football rival from that other city, a competing brass band or someone from a different ethnic group.

Scholars, as well as those outside academia offer many types of explanations for how the individuals within these groups can become convinced that violence is acceptable or even necessary. Propaganda, hate speech, political systems, scarcity of resources, instincts or emotions are just a few examples. This thesis will focus on an arguably more fundamental cause: the role of perceived threat. An important branch of the academic literature focuses on how threat perceptions can shape political outcomes or attitudes. For example, previous research has considered the relationship between threat and pro/anti peace attitudes (Silva et al. 2013), psychological well-being (Schmid and Muldoon 2013; Hirsch-Hoefler et al. 2016), justice and cost-benefit motivations (Hirschberger et al. 2015), conservative and liberal political positions (Elad-Strenger and Shahar 2017) and much more.

Although often theorized, there have been relatively few empirical assessments of the relationship between different types of threat on the one hand, and outgroup hostilities or violent attitudes on the other hand. Recently, however, scholars have started to make the distinction between realistic threats, which relate to individuals’ jobs, power, well-being and safety, and symbolic threats, pertaining to people’s norms, morals, values and identity. Yet, only rarely has previous research investigated the effects of different interpretations of a perceived threat pertaining to the same topic on people’s attitudes. Moreover, this has thus far predominantly been done using correlational methods, while we lack experimental approaches. Therefore, this thesis attempts to provide an answer to the following research question: How do realistic and symbolic threat perceptions affect outgroup hostilities?

The literature on threat perceptions argues that realistic threats are more likely to lead to pragmatic attitudes than symbolic threats. Also, this strain of theories suggests that realistic threats are to a higher degree associated with ingroup favoritism, as opposed to symbolic threats. Symbolic threats, on the other hand, cause a heightened inclination for individuals to morally exclude others. The theory also expects that symbolic threats lead to a decrease of empathy vis-à-vis the outgroup. The perception of both realistic and symbolic threat is likely to cause an increase in prejudice, but it is unclear which of the two types is the strongest antecedent in this regard. Through these outgroup
hostilities, individuals are likely to become more supportive toward the use of violence, although there is no theoretical expectation as to which type of threat increases these attitudes the most.

Thus far, little research has empirically, differentiated between realistic and symbolic threats, and ascertained how they affect outgroup hostilities. One exception is a study by Obaidi et al. (2018), who conducted a correlational survey study on the question which of these two types of threat is associated with the most hostile responses. Experimental research, which can be employed to infer causality, has to my knowledge not been conducted in this context. In order to fill this gap, I have made us of a survey-experimental design to explore how perceived realistic and symbolic threats affect outgroup hostility. I have constructed the “threat” of immigration in a realistic frame and a symbolic frame, and these frames have then been randomly distributed among the experiment’s participants (n = 97). The respondents subsequently filled in the same survey. Their answers to these surveys have then been compared in order to distinguish potential variation in peoples’ degrees and types of outgroup hostilities, and violent attitudes.

In line with the theory, this study finds that individuals exposed to a frame associated with realistic threats do indeed exhibit more pragmatic attitudes than those exposed to one containing symbolic threats. Perceived symbolic threats, on the other hand, are associated with a higher degree of moral exclusion, a decrease in empathy, and a greater inclination towards prejudice. Going against the theory, the findings seem to indicate that individuals who were shown the symbolic threat frame exhibit a higher degree of ingroup favoritism than their counterparts who read the realistic threat article. Finally, and somewhat surprisingly given the overall tendency of perceived symbolic threats leading to more hostile attitudes than perceived realistic threats, there seems to be no difference between the groups in terms of the respondents’ attitudes towards the use of violence. It must be noted that only the variable on pragmatism was significant using all statistical methods employed here.

These findings are important because they inform us about the role different types of perceived threat plays in shaping attitudinal outcomes, something that has been theorized a lot, but scrutinized only rarely. This thesis contributes to the peace and conflict and political science literature in the sense that it can show us how and in which circumstances people can become more hostile and violent, and how states are therefore able to use the types of frames to reach certain outcomes. In turn, this can spark more attention for the role threat perceptions play in politics. This study also provides us with a perceived intergroup threat perspective of the (EU’s) immigration debate. Although the central academic topic of inquiry here is perceived threat, and not immigration as such, it still increases our understanding of how political actors, mainstream or far-right, frame the immigration debate, which, again, can leads to various different outcomes.

This thesis will proceed as follows. First, Chapter 2 starts off with an overview of previous literature on both the theoretical role of perceived threat in intergroup relations as well as the
corresponding empirical findings. This overview will also result in the specific research gap that this thesis will attempt to fill. Then, in Chapter 3, there will be a theoretical account of the pathway from perceived threat to outgroup hostilities, and, one step further, to violent attitudes. Chapter 4 will subsequently lay out the methodological foundations of this study, explaining why an experiment is most suitable for answering the research question, how the exact procedure took place and why there were certain issues of validity and reliability. Chapter 5 will present the findings by providing the “raw" descriptives, an in-depth analysis using various methods, and a subsequent evaluation of the hypotheses. This chapter will also include a test of design. Finally, Chapter 6 will discuss the findings and their limitations. It will conclude by discussing the relevance and future directions of this research.
2. Literature review

In this section, the existing research on the role of threat in intergroup relations will be discussed. Taking a broad perspective, it will first discuss parochial altruism and how this concept relates to outgroup hostilities. Subsequently, there will be a paragraph on research that has studied the consequences of threat. Then, it will discuss previous findings pertaining to realistic and symbolic threat. After that, there will be an overview of past research on threat and immigration. Lastly, this chapter will discuss the research gap that motivates this study.

2.1 Parochial altruism and intergroup relations

It is quite well-established within social and evolutionary psychology that humans possess an inherent inclination for a phenomenon called parochial altruism (Choi and Bowles 2007; Bernhard et al. 2006; Abbink et al. 2012; also Rusch 2014 for an overview of the concept). Altruism, or the “benefiting fellow group members at a cost of oneself” (Choi and Bowles 2007, 636) and parochialism, or “hostility toward individuals not of one’s own ethnic, racial, or other group” (Ibid) are both commonly observed types of human behavior. Parochial altruism, a combination of the two, can possibly explain why people sometimes exhibit cooperative, and at other times conflictive behavior (Abbink et al. 2012). Research suggests that humans evolved a sense of parochial altruism due to a history of violent intergroup conflict (Ibid).

Aside from the evolutionary school, favoring your ingroup also makes sense from a social identity perspective. Psychologically, it is beneficial to antagonize the outgroup because this offers a sense of belonging, a distinct value system and an increase in self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Brewer 1999; Stephan et al. 2009). Due to their importance, human fear the destruction of the groups they live in almost as much as their own death (Stephan et al. 2009, 1), and consequently we are inclined to favor our ingroup, and exhibit hostility towards outgroups. Moreover, this dynamic is reinforced in situations of peril or competition. This can explain why ingroup members may perceive outgroups and their members as threatening (Ibid).

This thesis’s point of departure is that threat plays a fundamental role in changing one’s preferences from cooperative or neutral to more conflictive attitudes, and ultimately behavior, towards other groups and their members. Attitudes, including political ones, have been found to remain stable over time (Silva et al. 2013), but perceptions of threat can change them substantially, for example when individuals are confronted with death (Frischlich et al. 2015) or when they feel disgusted (Cottrell and Neuberg 2005; Neuberg et al. 2011; Faulkner et al. 2004), or stressed (Hirsch-Hoefer et al. 2014).
2.2 The consequences of threat

Aside from the more obvious consequences of threat\(^1\) such as increased prejudice, (Velasco-González et al. 2008; Quillian 1995), stereotyping (which is often a mediating variable, see Velasco-González et al. 2008; Curşeu et al. 2007; Jonas and Fritsche 2013), and aggressive national security policy preferences (Huddy et al. 2005) the main effects of threat established in the previous literature can be categorized into three groups: cognitive responses, emotional responses, and behavioral responses (Stephan et al. 2009, 6-22). Cognitively, threats have been found to result in changes in stereotypes (Quist and Resendez 2003) and increased intolerance toward the outgroup (Shamir and Sagiv-Schiffter 2006). Previous work has also shown that, in case of a threat, cognitive biases such as ultimate attribution errors\(^2\), communicative biases and memory biases.\(^3\) (Stephan et al. 2009, 17). Other examples are stereotype disconfirmation biases (where outgroup stereotypes are more difficult to invalidate than ingroup stereotypes) and overestimation biases (where the outgroup is perceived to be larger than it actually is) (Ibid). Due to threat, people can also react by opposing policies that were meant to favor the outgroup (Renfro et al. 2006), whereas attitudes toward the ingroup may become more favorable (Landau et al. 2004, 9); and ingroup cohesiveness can increase (Karasawa et al. 2004). Importantly, as Stephan and colleagues note, all of these cognitive biases “make violence against the outgroup more likely and easier to justify” (2009, 18).

Emotionally, threat may lead individuals to experience anxiety (Petersen 2010; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Stephan et al. 2005; Renfro et al. 2006), anger (Marcus et al. 2006) and resentment (Cottrell and Neuberg 2005). Additionally, people may express feelings of disgust (Cottrell and Neuberg 2005; Neuberg et al. 2011; Faulkner et al. 2004), contempt (Mackie et al. 2000) and likely a range of other emotions such as hatred, humiliation, despair, and panic (Stephan et al. 2009, 18). Threat may also lead to a decrease in empathy for outgroup members, as is for example demonstrated by studies on *Schadenfreude*, and, inversely, *Glückschmerz* (Leach et al. 2003; Cikara et al. 2014). Different types of threat, and different types of outgroups, have been found to provoke different emotions (Stephan et al. 2009, 19-20; Cottrell and Neuberg 2005).

In terms of behavior, responses to threat are myriad. Individuals may show signs of withdrawal, negotiation, aggression, discrimination, lying, cheating, harassment, protests, and other types of intergroup conflict (Stephan et al. 2009, 20). Sometimes, threat leads to direct hostility against the outgroup that is perceived to be the source of the threat, but in other instances threats can lead to “displaced hostility” against outgroups that are not related to the threat’s perceived

\(^{1}\) See Canetti et al. 2017, 81 for an overview

\(^{2}\) The phenomenon in which negative acts perpetrated by the outgroup are explained in terms of the characteristics of the members, whereas more positive outgroup actions are attributed to the specific situation (Stephan et al. 2009, 17)

\(^{3}\) For example that people reiterate negative outgroup behavior in more abstract terms than ingroup behavior; or that they are more likely to remember negative outgroup acts if they are attributed to their inherent qualities, and positive acts if they are related to situational factors. (Stephan et al. 2009, 17)
origin (Ibid). People can also react negatively to the stress generated by threats (Hirsch-Hoefler et al. 2014; Stephan et al. 2009, 21). Threats have also been found to increase certain physiological responses, such as cardiovascular (e.g., heart rate, blood pressure) responses (Littleford et al. 2005) or noradrenergic (the production of adrenaline) activity (Oxley et al. 2008)\(^4\), both aimed to make the body ready for action. One theory behind this is that the brain puts aside logical reasoning and behaves more immediately and viscerally, in cases of imminent threat (see e.g. Westen 2007). In terms of intragroup dynamics, threats can lead to more negative responses to defectors or deviants in the ingroup and greater enforcement of and emphasis on group boundaries, but in some cases also to ingroup disaffiliation (Stephan et al. 2009, 21-22). Interestingly, sometimes threat leads to more positive behavior towards outgroups, for example when individuals want to appear non-prejudiced in order to preserve a positive image of themselves and their ingroup (e.g. Devine et al. 1991).

In line with Stephan et al. (2009), in this thesis I will argue that the specific attitudinal responses to threat are partly dependent on the specific characteristics of the perceived threat, particularly whether the threat is perceived as realistic or symbolic. This will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.3 Realistic and symbolic threat

According to Stephan and colleagues, who are among the founders of Intergroup Threat Theory (ITT), realistic threats pertain to a group’s “power, resources, and general welfare”, and the individual’s concerns about “pain, torture, or death, as well as economic loss, deprivation of valued resources [and] health or personal security” (Stephan et al. 2009, 3-4) Symbolic threats, on the other hand, refer to concerns about a group’s “religion, values, belief system, ideology, philosophy, morality, or worldview” and the individual’s “loss of face or honor and the undermining of [his or her] self-identity or self-esteem (Ibid, 4). Studies have considered both types of threat. Cottrell and Neuberg (2005) find support for their “sociofunctional” approach, in the sense that people produce qualitatively different emotions toward different groups. For example, gay men and lesbian women are predominantly seen as a symbolic threat, as there is a perceived relationship between homosexuality and amoral behaviors (Ibid). On the other hand, Hirschberger and colleagues (2015, 1) found that primes of death, indicating a realistic threat, “increased justice related motivations”, which, in turn, were observed to lead to more support for

\(^4\) There are actually quite well-mapped responses to imminent threat. For example, “rapid extensor-flexor movement occurs throughout the body within 30 to 50 ms” (Oxley et al. 2008, 1667) in case of acute threat, most likely to protect the vital organs (e.g. by blinking). Slightly less acutely, perceptions of threat “causes signals from the sensory cortex to be relayed to the thalamus and ultimately to the brain stem, resulting in heightened noradrenergic activity in the locus ceruleus” (Ibid). This stimulates the bodies’ basic functions, making it ready for a fight-or-flight response.
violence. They argue that existential threats increase violent intergroup conflict because they raise the desire for retributive justice, rather than the conviction that violence is effective as a strategy.

A substantial amount of additional studies has separately considered realistic threat (e.g. Sherif’s classic Robber’s Cave experiment, see Riek et al. 2006, 336; Brown et al. 2001; Quillian 1995; Maddux et al. 2008); and symbolic threat (e.g. Biernat et al. 1996; Sawires and Peacock 2000) but also the interplay between them. For example, Schmid and Muldoon found that realistic and symbolic threat lead to a decrease in psychological well-being (2013). In a similar vein, Charles-Toussaint and Crowson (2010) observed that perceived realistic and symbolic threat predicted prejudice, and that the effect of right-wing authoritarianism was fully mediated through perceptions of symbolic threat, and partially through those of realistic threat. Interestingly, Brambilla and Butz (2012) have found that while macro-symbolic threat (operationalized here as gay men who “threaten” values) impacts attitudes toward social groups perceived to threaten the ingroup’s values, macroeconomic (i.e. realistic) threat leads to more negative views of Asian’s (a group whose stereotypes imply realistic threat). With these findings, they strengthen the earlier conclusion that “a general climate of economic threat resulting from economic downturns heightens out-group hostility” (Ibid, 321). Similar work has also been done regarding realistic and symbolic threats in relation to the immigration debate. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.4 Immigration and threat

There is a large body of literature on the general topic of immigration, which is beyond the scope of this study. However, some previous research on immigration has considered realistic and/or symbolic threats. For example, McLaren’s (2003) study concluded that perceived threat is associated with the preference to expel immigrants. Callens et al. (2015) found that perceptions of threat lead to less support for multicultural policies and a stronger preference for assimilation, although they do not differentiate between realistic and symbolic threats, arguing that these are highly correlated (see also Riek et al. 2006). In a study that did adhere to this distinction between types of threat, it was found by Velasco-González et al. (2008) that symbolic threat (and stereotypes), but not realistic threats, leads to prejudice against Muslims in the Netherlands. They also found that those less strongly perceiving symbolic threat endorsed multiculturalism to a greater extent than those who saw Muslims as a symbolic threat (2008, 680). Also in the Netherlands, Curşeu and colleagues (2007) observed that both realistic and symbolic perceptions of threat are mediated by intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes.5 Pereira et al. (2010), on the other hand, looked at realistic and symbolic threat as mediators in a European-wide sample. They

---

5 In the earlier versions of ITT, these were considered to be two other types of threat, aside from realistic and symbolic threat. In the most recent version, as is laid out by Stephan et al. (2009, 3), negative stereotypes are seen as a cause of threat, whereas intergroup anxiety is argued to be an interaction-based subtype of threat] are seen as either sub-types of realistic or symbolic threat.
found that the relationship between prejudice and opposition to immigration was more strongly mediated by realistic threat than by symbolic threat, concluding that for some, threat perceptions can be factors that legitimize discrimination. Wlodarzyk et al. (2014) observed that when the host society is seen as legitimate, the perception of realistic threat increases, which, in turn, leads to higher degrees of ingroup favoritism and less prosocial responses to the outgroup. They argued that symbolic threat plays a more limited role. Stephan et al. (2005) experimentally assessed ITT by looking at the causal role threats play in attitudes toward immigration. Their results indicate that attitudes towards immigrants were most negative when they were constructed as both a realistic and symbolic threat.

2.5 The research gap: hostility differentiation and causality
Despite previous research on the relationship between realistic and symbolic threat and various outgroup hostilities, we are still left with the question of which type of perceived threat - realistic or symbolic - leads to which type of outgroup hostility, and which of the two leads to more violent attitudes towards immigrants. A case in point, however, is the study by Obaidi and colleagues (2018), who used five cross-cultural surveys to analyze the relationship between different types of threat (realistic, symbolic and terror). They found that symbolic threats led to greater outgroup hostility than realistic threats (and terror threats, for which they found no effect). These results are remarkably stable across cultural contexts. However, their approach only makes use of one measure of outgroup hostility per study (e.g. support for PEGIDA-like movements\(^6\) willingness to support Muslim prosecution or support for anti-Western violence), while we can expect there to be differentiated attitudinal effects of realistic and symbolic threat, respectively. More importantly, Obaidi et al.’s research is based on survey data and thus correlational data. Therefore, as they also recognize themselves (2018, 30), the causal direction cannot be established. This allows for the possibility that the relationship between threat and outgroup hostilities is actually a “bidirectional” relationship; it may very well be that people perceive more threat because they are more hostile. Making use of an experiment, as Obaidi and colleagues also note (Ibid, 30-31), can overcome this hurdle of establishing causal direction. They argue that it would be ideal to “experimentally manipulate the constructs [they] examined” (Ibid, 30). Canetti et al. also note that “[f]uture studies should examine the role of other types of threat perceptions. Examining the different response patterns to symbolic and realistic threats […] may shed more light on the relationship between threat perceptions and intergroup relations” (2017, 101). Therefore, I argue that by doing an experiment, I can address the empirical gap we have in terms of assessing the different outcomes of perceived realistic and symbolic threat.

\(^6\) Abbrev.: Patriotische Europäer Gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes, an anti-Islam movement
Furthermore, I acknowledge Obaidi et al’s (2018, 8) argument that research in these domains is often conducted using WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic) samples. The strength of their own study is precisely their empirical way around this: by using samples from both the Muslim and non-Muslim world. As this thesis is focused on immigration to the EU, there is need for an EU sample that does not consist of students or only the highly educated and rich, thereby addressing the WEIRD-issue. By using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, I will attempt to find my way around this, as it is likely to include a more diverse range of individuals in the sample than what is common practice in psychological research in and around universities. This will be explained more in detail in paragraph 4.2 in the chapter on the research design.
3. Theoretical framework

How can the perception of intergroup threat lead to various types of outgroup hostilities, and, situated one step further, violent attitudes? This theoretical section will outline the causal mechanisms that explain the connection between the independent variable - threat perceptions - and the dependent variables - outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes. First, there will be an overview of some of the most important concepts and their definitions that will be used in the remainder of this thesis. Second, the theorized causal mechanisms, both general and specific, will be presented and explained, from which a set of hypotheses are derived, that will be tested in the analysis part of this thesis.

3.1 Concepts

3.1.1 Intergroup threat theory

How should the role of perceived threat in intergroup relations be conceptualized? Following Stephan et al., who are among the founders of intergroup threat theory (ITT, formerly integrated threat theory), “an intergroup threat is experienced when members of one group perceive that another group is in a position to cause them harm” (2009, 2; Schmid and Muldoon 2013, 2). In Stephan and Stephan’s earlier framework (1996; Stephan et al. 2002), the concept of threat included four subtypes: realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes (1996, 618-619). The first two categories will be discussed more in depth in the next section as they will serve as key independent variables in this study. The latter two categories are now, regarding ITT, seen as obsolete in terms of type of threat. Intergroup anxiety, which occurs when people feel personally threatened during intergroup interactions (Stephan and Stephan 1996, 619), is in Stephan et al.’s latest theoretical adaptation regarded as a “subtype of threat centering on apprehensions about interacting with outgroup members” (Stephan et al. 2009, 3). Negative stereotypes, which cause intergroup interactions to be expected to be “conflictual or unpleasant” (Stephan and Stephan 1996) are now seen as a cause of threat (Stephan et al. 2009, 3). As these four types of threat are closely correlated (Riek et al. 2006), scholars nowadays usually employ merely realistic and symbolic threats. This is also recognized by Stephan et al. (2009) whose ITT model now argues for the existence of only these two types of threat.

3.1.2 Perceived realistic and symbolic threat

As stated earlier, realistic and symbolic threat, as distinguished by Stephan et al. (2009) will serve as the main independent variables in this thesis. Realistic threats concern threats to the ingroup’s very existence; its political and economic power; and its physical and material wellbeing (of both the ingroup and its members) (Stephan and Stephan 1996, 618-619). The study of realistic threats has its
roots in realistic group conflict theory (RGCT), which argues that intergroup competition for scarce resources can lead to prejudice towards the outgroup. The concept of realistic threat in ITT takes a broader perspective than this: it is any threat to the welfare of the group or its members (Stephan and Renfro 2002, 192-193). Symbolic threats, on the other hand, consist primarily of perceived group differences in values, morals, standards, beliefs and attitudes. These types of perceived threat are thus detrimental to the group’s worldview, and they partly emerge because the ingroup believes in the moral rightness of its own belief system (Stephan and Stephan 1996, 619). In contrast to realistic threats, perceived symbolic threats are intangible. The concept of symbolic threat is derived from “theories of symbolic and modern racism” and similar to “symbolic attitudes” (Stephan and Renfro 2002, 193-194) but there are important differences. For instance, symbolic racism is often seen as a form of prejudice, while symbolic threat is seen as a cause of prejudice in ITT (Ibid).

Aside from differentiating between realistic and symbolic threats, ITT also distinguishes group threats from individual threats. There are threats to the ingroup as a whole, and threats to individual members of ingroups, in which these individuals perceive this threat as a function of their membership of a certain group (Stephan and Renfro 2002:198). In the most recent revision of the theory, Stephan et al. (2009, 3-4) consider realistic group threats to be pertaining to a group’s “power, resources, and general welfare.” They regard symbolic group threats as threats to a group’s “religion, values, belief system, ideology, philosophy, morality, or worldview.” Realistic individual threats, then, relate to threats of “actual physical or material harm to an individual group member such as pain, torture, or death, as well as economic loss, deprivation of valued resources, and threats to health or personal security.” Finally, symbolic individual threats refer to “loss of face or honor and the undermining of an individual’s self-identity or self-esteem” (Ibid). See figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group level</th>
<th>Realistic</th>
<th>Symbolic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threats to the group’s:</td>
<td>Threats to the group’s:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- power</td>
<td>- religion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- resources</td>
<td>- values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- general welfare</td>
<td>- belief system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ideology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- philosophy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- morality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- worldview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Individual level | Threats to the individual’s: | Threats to the individual’s: |
| | Such as pain, torture, death, economic loss, resource deprivation, health, personal security | Such as loss of face, loss of honor |
| | - physical safety | - self-identity |
| | - material safety | - self-esteem |

Figure 1. Group-level and individual-level threats. Based on Stephan et al. (2009).
As can be seen in the figure, there seems to be quite a lot of overlap between group threats and individual threats. The same kind of overlap can be distinguished when one looks at the responses to threat (which will be discussed more in detail in the next section). Threats towards individuals are expected to lead to emotions related to a concern for the self, such as fear and vulnerability. Threats to the group, on the other hand, are more likely to lead to emotions such as anger, resentment and collective guilt, which concern the group’s welfare (Stephan et al. 2009, 19). In the case of threat to an individual, fear is a more logical response than anger, because fear is more probable to lead to avoidance. Anger, on the other hand, can mobilize the ingroup, so employing angry emotions may be a better strategy when the group as a whole is threatened (Ibid). Additionally, according to Stephan et al. (2009, 23) individual threats are more likely to be related to “cognitive biases, fear, helplessness, avoidance, appeasement, ingratiation, decrements in performance, disaffiliation with the ingroup, and identification with the aggressor” than threats to the group. Group threats, on the other hand, may be more likely to lead to “increases in group cohesion, groupthink, expressions of anger and aggression, reductions in collective guilt […], and collective responses to the other group such as strikes, boycotts, and warfare” (Ibid).

Accepting the differences between group threats and individual threats, the remainder of this thesis will adhere to a categorization of realistic versus symbolic threat, which can take the form of both group and individual threats. This is a practical choice, because in this research, individual threats seem to be hard to disentangle from group threats. The amount of manipulated variables might become too high for the scope of this thesis if there also has to be a distinction between group-level and individual-level threats. In contrast, realistic and symbolic threats appear to be more easy to separate analytically. Therefore, the remainder of this study will study realistic versus symbolic threats, and it will leave the study of different effects and antecedents of group versus individual threats to further research.

3.1.3 The subjectivity of threat: constructions and perceptions

One could argue that threats are rarely, if ever, “real” or “objective”. There are two important moments in which the theoretical “real value” of threats are altered. First, threats are actively or passively constructed (e.g. McDonald 2008; Sjöstedt 2008; Song 2015; Ibek 2015). Second, threats are perceived by the receiver, creating his or her very own interpretation of the threat and contextual circumstances, which encourages responses accordingly (e.g. Elad-Strenger and Shahar 2017; Jonas and Fritsche 2013; Schmid et al. 2008; see Stephan et al. 2009, 5). This is why I would argue that threats are only rarely, if ever, perceived at their “true value”, due to both processes of their construction and perception.

Securitization theory, within the framework of the so-called Copenhagen School, asserts that threats are constructed (Ibek 2015). Being a constructivist approach, it argue that “[t]hreats and vulnerabilities can arise in many different areas, military and non-military, but to count as security
issues they have to meet strictly defined criteria that distinguish them from the normal run of the merely political. They have to be staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement for extraordinary measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind” (Ibid, 174). The most important claim of securitization is not the “objective characterization” of the threat, but the way it is put forward. It then becomes imperative for actors, often decision-makers, to take action justifying the use of extraordinary resources (Ibid, 175). This presentation of threat can take the form of speech acts, but also images or practices. They can be undertaken by state actors, but also by others. Securitization processes can be incremental, and they can resonate differently among different audiences (McDonald 2008).

Aside from being constructed, the different kinds of threat that are being discussed in the remainder of this study are also inherently perceptions of those threats (see also Stephan et al. 2009, 5). There is a logic for individuals to perceive threats, even when these threats are qualitatively (or quantitatively) not as great as they perceive them to be. Stephan et al. (2009, 1) argue that to perceive a threat when there is none may be a less costly error than not to perceive a threat when there it does in fact exist. This is supported by research in evolutionary psychology; Neuberg et al. (2011) argue that the human “threat detection system” is imperfect. Consequently, these “errors of interpretation” are biased more towards inferring a threat, i.e. being risk-averse (Neuberg et al. 2011, 1048; Neuberg and Schaller 2016, 2).

Therefore, I argue it is to some extent misleading to label “realistic threats” as such, because they are by no means “real”. Simultaneously, all threats are in a way “symbolic”, because they are actively or passively constructed on the one end and perceived variously on the other end, making them almost by definition “unreal”. However, in this thesis I still argue that there is an ontological difference between realistic and symbolic threats, as they pertain to different ontological categories (“material” vs. “non-material”). Therefore, I definitely see the value of conducting research using this distinction between realistic and symbolic threat. For the purpose of this thesis, I will also adhere to “realistic” vs. “symbolic” threats, the same labels that are used in the previous literature.

3.1.4 Outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes
In this study, outgroup hostilities is an umbrella term for various attitudes that are generally perceived as negative for social interaction. It can be defined as “negative attitudes and behaviours with respect to an out-group” (Hewstone and Greenland 2000, 136), in which the word negative refers to those outcomes that are generally seen as detrimental to group relations. Violent attitudes, then go one step further (see below). It must be noted that these two concepts are related - violent attitudes can be seen as a sub-category of outgroup hostility. In analytical terms, however, they will be regarded as separate concepts within the same causal chain. This will be explained more in detail in paragraph 3.2.
There are many types of outgroup hostilities, most of them beyond the scope of this thesis. Drawing from previous literature, the ones that will be take into account in this study, are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of outgroup hostility</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatism/willingness to negotiate</td>
<td>Individual’s willingness to engage in negotiation, and thereby the preparedness to making sacrifices to reach the desired goal (Stephan et al. 2009, 22).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingroup favoritism</td>
<td>A form of discrimination protecting the dominant ingroup from perceived threat to safety or resources (Perry et al. 2018, 91).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral exclusion</td>
<td>Perceiving those outside one’s ingroup as excluded from fair treatment and outcomes (Leighton 2012, 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease in empathy</td>
<td>A decrease in affective reactions as a result of and synchronized with inferred or forecasted emotions of outgroup member (Cikara et al. 2014, 111).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice</td>
<td>The formulation of negative affect and the display of “hostile discriminatory behavior” towards member of other groups (Curșeu et al. 2007, 126)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent attitudes</td>
<td>Following Sundberg, the concept of violent attitudes pertains to attitudes that go one step further than outgroup hostilities, namely “positive appraisals of acts, actors, or norms of physical harm or damage” (Sundberg 2014, 70).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The choice for these concepts is largely based on them being relatively easy to measure, compared to some other, more intangible phenomena such as dehumanization, preference for genocide or avoidance. Operationalizations will be discussed in the methodological chapter. For an overview of other potential forms of outgroup hostilities as a result of threat, see Stephan et al. (2009, 22-24).

3.2 The causal mechanism and hypotheses

In this section, the causal mechanisms connecting the independent variable - perceived threat - to the dependent variables - outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes - will be outlined and discussed. There will be a description of both the general causal mechanism (from threat to violent attitudes) and the specific causal mechanisms related to different kinds of threat that will be the subject of the remainder of this thesis.

3.2.1 From threat to outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes

When humans perceive a threat, a number of different responses may occur that make outgroup hostilities, or even violent attitudes, more likely to occur. Following Stephan et al. (2009), as was also discussed in the literature review, there are cognitive, emotional and behavioral responses. As it is
sometimes difficult to analytically distinguish conditions, emotions and behaviors from one another, some overlap across these categories can occur. Nonetheless, these three broad categories capture the most important components of the general pathway from threat to outgroup hostilities and, ultimately, violent attitudes.

Cognitive responses

First, there are certain cognitive responses to threatening situations. As individuals are likely to change their perception of the outgroup when they are threatened, they are likely to adopt cognitions of stereotyping, ethnocentrism, intolerance, hatred, and outgroup dehumanization. Additionally, according to Stephan et al. (2009), various cognitive biases can be amplified by threats:

- Ultimate attribution errors: individuals attribute negative acts of the outgroup to group characteristics, while positive actions by the outgroup and negative actions by the ingroup are attributed to the situation.
- Communicative: more abstract descriptions of outgroup behavior than of ingroup behavior
- Memory biases: individuals are more likely to remember negative behavior perpetrated by the outgroup when those types of behavior have been attributed to their inherent characteristics, and positive behaviors when they are attributed to the situation
- Increase in stereotype disconfirmation bias: stereotypes about the outgroup are more difficult to disconfirm than ingroup stereotypes
- Overestimation bias: size of the outgroup is overestimated
- People may oppose policies that favor the outgroup
- People may condone extreme behaviors of the ingroup that they would normally not condone
- Attitudes towards the ingroup may become more favorable and ingroup cohesiveness may increase

In light of these cognitive biases, Stephan et al. (2009) conclude that their amplification due to threat can make violence against the outgroup more likely and easier to justify. On a less abstract level, Neuberg and Schaller (2016, 2) argue that “[P]eople rarely have direct perceptual access to others’ aggressive, deceptive, or free-riding intentions, or to the pathogens lurking within their bodies.” Therefore, individual perceivers make use of cues to infer potential threats from others. As these cues are inherently erroneous, people make threat inference errors when they assess threats. The cognitive biases listed above amplify these processes (Stephan et al. 2009)
Emotional responses

When individuals react to threats, their emotions are likely to be negative. They can include “fear, anxiety, anger, and resentment […] contempt and disgust […] vulnerability […] collective guilt […] rage, hatred, humiliation, dread, helplessness, despair, righteous indignation, and panic” (Stephan et al. 2009, 18). Threat may also increase empathy for ingroup members, while at the same time decreasing it for members of the outgroup. This can even lead to cases of Schadenfreude, which entails the pleasure of seeing an outgroup suffer. Moreover, a process called infra-humanization can take place, in which individuals are “unwilling to attribute the capacity to experience the same types of of subtle human emotions felt by the ingroup (e.g. nostalgia, guilt) to members of the outgroup. Instead, the outgroup is thought to be capable of experiencing only the same basic emotions as animals (e.g. anger, pleasure)” (Stephan et al. 2009, 20).

Terror management theory (TMT) ties into the role of emotional responses by arguing that humans’ instinctive desire for survival and their awareness of their future death causes them to experience a feeling of “annihilation anxiety” (Jonas and Fritsche 2013). TMT supposes that our culture offers a buffer from this fear of dying as it allows us to feel valuable in terms of our contributions to a “meaningful reality” and being part of an “immortal, collective identity.” This buffer consists of two components: 1) adoption of a cultural worldview offering individual death transcendence; and 2) a degree of self-esteem derived from adhering to this worldview (Ibid, 544). As this is a mechanism helping people deal with their own mortality, the awareness of death encourages people to cling to their worldviews. The combination of TMT and intergroup dynamics would therefore emphasize the role of group membership in offering buffers for annihilation anxiety. When reacting to a threat, individuals prioritize their collective rather than their personal categorization (Ibid). This leads to a perceived sort of immortality for the individual: “‘I’ will die, but ‘we’ will live” (Ibid).

Building on theory and research about mortality salience (MS), or being reminded of death, it can be argued that TMT is indeed a phenomenon that can lead to greater group hostility (Ibid). First, it has been found that MS increases self-protection and causes individuals to defend or increase their self-esteem. Also, and for this research more importantly, when mortality is salient, individuals perceive collective self-definitions to be more important, and they become more adamant about their cultural worldviews and become more prepared to defend them, if necessary. Accordingly, in light of MS theory, individuals become more favorable towards their ingroup and more hostile towards outgroups or others who threaten their norms or belief system (Ibid). This dynamic, in turn, can lead to “vicious cycles of violence and counterviolence” (Ibid).
Behavioral responses

On a more behavioral level, Stephan et al. firstly argue that intergroup threat can lead to “benign” types of behavior such as withdrawal, submission and negotiation, but also to more unkind sorts such as “aggression (direct or displaced), discrimination, lying, cheating, stealing, harassment, retaliation, sabotage, protests, strikes, warfare, and other forms of open intergroup conflict” (2009, 20). In some cases, threats can lead to direct hostility against the outgroup that is closely related to the perceived source of the threat. In other cases, we can observe displaced hostility against an outgroup that is not related to the perceived source of the threat (Ibid). Sometimes, there can be cases of positive behavioral responses to threat, for example when people are motivated to appear non-prejudiced in order to maintain a positive self- and group-image (Ibid). In terms of group dynamics, individuals become more negative towards defectors or deviants within the ingroup, and intergroup boundaries are policed increasingly. Occasionally, when the outgroup is bigger, more powerful and more desirable than the ingroup, threatening situations may lead people to become disaffiliated with the ingroup. Generally, though, the ability of minorities to influence the majority decreases when there is a threat, and groupthink is likely to increase. However, threats can also throw an ingroup in total disarray (Ibid).

Related to emotional responses is what social psychologists term “the behavioral immune system”. Physiologically, humans have an evolved immune system on how to deal with pathogens. Behaviorally, researchers argue, we have a same kind of immune system that continuously scans the environment for threats in the form of pathogens (e.g. food, people, objects) and acts upon these threats once perceived, primarily to avoid contact. Disgust is crucial in this regard, as it has proven to be the most important emotion moving individuals away from potentially dangerous objects (Aaroe et al. 2017, 6-9). Variations in disgust can thus explain how the behavioral immune system influences political attitudes: people who exhibit more disgust are more likely to support policies that decrease the chance of contact with perceived threatening pathogens (Ibid, 10-11). Aaroe et al. investigate this claim by looking at attitudes towards immigration. Earlier research indicates that there are two broad strains of opposition to immigration: peoples’ desire to preserve their cultural norms and values; and concerns about economic competition and job insecurity (Ibid, 11). Interestingly enough, one can broadly compare these concerns to symbolic and realistic threat, respectively. Digging deeper, psychologists and biologists offer two explanations for why “different others” are perceived as a threat. The first is that the human species developed an “adaptive predisposition” against strangers from outgroups because they potentially carried different pathogens, thereby causing disease. The second explanation is that the predisposition to see others as a pathogen threat is a byproduct of “being hyper-vigilant against anything and everyone that appears unfamiliar”, rather than an adaptive trait in itself (Ibid, 11-12).
Finally, and importantly, individuals can react negatively to the stress caused by threat (Stephan et al. 2009, 21). As was already discussed in the literature review, the idea here is that the brain puts aside logical reasoning and behaves more immediately and viscerally (Westen 2007). As was shown earlier, this way of thinking about threat, both acute and non-acute, is supported by neurobiological research. In short, the perception of threat prepares the body in some cases for a fight-or-flight response (Schaller and Neuberg 2012, 9).

In sum

Summarized, individuals respond to threats in myriad of ways. Cognitively, threats make it difficult for people to think “clearly, carefully or accurately” about the outgroup and come up with a corresponding reaction. Emotionally, the internal responses are likely to be negative, thus having negative implications for the actual response to the threat. Behaviorally, individuals are directed toward approach (e.g. aggression) or avoidance (appeasement, withdrawal), but threat can also lead groups to immobilize. Threat can activate all kinds of stress reactions associated with these responses, behaviorally but also physically. Most often, threats alone are not the sole cause of these reactions, but they are rather amplifications of existing responses (Stephan et al. 2009, 23-24). For an overview of the general causal mechanism from threat to outgroup hostilities, see figure 3.3 below.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 3.3. The general causal mechanism from perceived threat to outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes

### 3.2.2 From realistic and symbolic threat to outgroup hostility and violent attitudes

**From realistic threat to pragmatism and ingroup favoritism**

As mentioned earlier, the study of realistic threat has its roots in RGCT, stressing the importance of scarce resources for how perceived threat can lead to more negative attitudes about the outgroup (Riek et al. 2006, 336). One could argue that the desire to protect the ingroup’s interests is the underlying encouragement for hostile attitudes and discrimination towards outgroups (Velasco González et al. 2008, 669). According to Stephan et al., realistic threats are more likely to lead to *pragmatic responses towards the outgroup,* types of behavior to deal with the threat. These may include withdrawal, avoidance and aggression. Additionally, realistic threats, rather than symbolic threats,
may lead to negotiations because actors are usually reluctant to change their core beliefs or values (Stephan et al. 2009, 22).\(^7\)

Aside from individuals’ willingness to negotiate, realistic threat is associated with *ingroup favoritism* as it is more likely to lead to discrimination on the basis of the “unequal distribution of resources” than of “denying cultural recognition and acceptance” (Perry et al. 2018, 91). According to Morrison and Ybarra, “perceived [realistic] threat often triggers attempts to preserve or improve the welfare of the ingroup,” and social identity theorists argue that when their group’s status is unstable, individuals can try to create a positive group identity by favoring their ingroup and by competing with outgroup members (2008, 157). This leads to the following hypotheses.\(^8\) See figure 3.4 for the causal argument.\(^9\)

Pragmatism:

H1: Individuals exposed to a realistic threat frame are more likely to exhibit pragmatist attitudes than those exposed to a symbolic threat frame

Ingroup favoritism:

H2: Individuals exposed to a realistic threat frame are more likely to exhibit attitudes of favoring their ingroup than those exposed to a symbolic threat frame

\[\text{Perceived realistic threat} \rightarrow \text{Pragmatism} \rightarrow \text{Ingroup favoritism}\]

Figure 3.4. The causal mechanism from perceived realistic threat to pragmatism and ingroup favoritism

From symbolic threat to moral exclusion and decreased empathy

It is likely that the “concern for protecting certain cultural symbols of the dominant group” (McLaren 2003, 916) leads to outgroup hostilities. Following ITT, symbolic threat is most likely to lead to *moral exclusion*. This is because threats to the ingroup’s values, cohesiveness and existence are

---

\(^7\) Hirschberger et al. (2015), however, find that existential threats often spur violent intergroup conflict because they increase the need for retributive justice, rather than that individuals see violence as a fruitful strategy. This is puzzling because it challenges the pragmatism claim made by Stephan et al., arguing that behavior is more based on an emotion like the need for justice, rather than an analysis of what is best for the group.

\(^8\) A threat frame refers to an issue, that can be perceived as a threat, framed as either in realistic or symbolic terms

\(^9\) Yet, other studies indicate that symbolic threats can also lead to ingroup favoritism, see e.g. Jetten et al. 1996
jeopardized by such threats. As the threat is symbolic in nature, it is unlikely that there is any solution possible through negotiation or finding a middle ground. Therefore, in some instances, the only way to address the threat may be moral exclusion (Stephan et al. 2009; Leighton 2012). The non-negotiable nature of symbolic threat creates a specific form of zero-sum conflict, in which values are constructed to be either “ours” or “theirs.” “To win,” then, involves the exclusion or destruction of the outgroup (Leighton 2012).

Research in psychology and cognitive neuroscience has provided strong evidence for decreased or even absent empathic responses are especially likely towards cultural outgroups (Cikara et al. 2014), which implicitly already assumes that people have less empathy for outgroups to begin with. It has also been found that, across racial, political and minimal boundaries, people generally feel less empathy towards threatening outgroups than towards neutral outgroups (Chang et al. 2016). Moreover, as was mentioned in the preceding chapter, individuals can experience counter-empathic responses in cases of threat (Ibid). Stephan and colleagues also mention reduced empathy as a consequence of symbolic threat (2009, 22). The literature does not offer a conclusive explanation for why symbolic threat should lead to a decrease in empathy, but it is likely that the “empathy-gap” between cultural outgroups described above is only amplified in case of a symbolic threat. See the hypotheses and causal mechanism (figure 3.5) below.

**Moral Exclusion:**

H3: Individuals exposed to a symbolic threat frame are more likely to exhibit attitudes of moral exclusion than those exposed to a realistic threat frame

**Decreased empathy:**

H4: Individuals exposed to a symbolic threat frame are more likely to exhibit a decrease in empathy than those exposed to a realistic threat frame

![Figure 3.5. The causal mechanism from perceived symbolic threat to moral exclusion and decreased empathy](image)

---

10 This can also be a consequence of realistic threat, see Chang et al. 2016, 70
**Threat and prejudice**

Realistic threats are associated with prejudice, especially regarding the immigration debate (Esses et al. 2001; Curşeu et al. 2007). Also, it has been found that in times of competition and economic threat, racial prejudice and anti-Semitism increase (Perry et al. 2018). Likewise, symbolic threats are also theorized to lead to prejudice, as value differences and conflicts arise (Velasco-González et al. 2008). “New norms, beliefs, and symbols can be considered as opposite to what one values leading to the fear that other cultures will override the in-group’s way of life” (Ibid, 669). This is also supported in previous research (e.g. Charles-Toussaint and Crowson 2010; Pettigrew and Meertens 1995). Therefore, in line with the causal argument (figure 3.6) the following hypothesis can be formulated:

**Prejudice:**

H5: Individuals exposed to a realistic threat frame are equally likely to exhibit prejudiced attitudes as those exposed to a symbolic threat frame

![Figure 3.6. The causal mechanism from perceived realistic and symbolic threat to prejudice](image)

**Threat and violent attitudes**

In terms of violent attitudes, research has been relatively scarce. Stephan et al. (2009) especially emphasize that the cognitive biases mentioned above, that are amplified in cases of threat, can make violence more likely and easier to justify. Importantly, it is unclear whether violent attitudes, if any, are first mediated through outgroup hostilities (e.g. prejudice or moral exclusion) or whether there is also an independent relationship between threat and violent preferences. This is schematically represented in figure 3.7. The corresponding hypothesis is as follows:

**Violent attitudes:**

H6: Individuals exposed to a realistic threat frame are equally likely to exhibit violent attitudes as those exposed to a symbolic threat frame
Figure 3.7. The causal mechanism from perceived realistic and symbolic threat to violent attitudes, possibly mediated through outgroup hostilities.
4. Research design

In this chapter, I will discuss the research design that was used to address the various hypotheses stipulated in paragraph 3.2 and the methodological limitations and choices behind this. First, I will provide my main reasons for choosing for an experiment, and an overview of the procedure employed in this study. Then, there will be a number of remarks on recruitment, focusing on the novel phenomenon of crowdsourcing respondents, and issues of generalizability. Subsequently, I will discuss the operationalization of the independent and dependent variables, and how they relate to the survey questions. After that, there will be a brief overview of the methodological tools that will be used to analyze the data. Finally, this chapter will comment on the limitations and a number of ethical considerations associated with this study.

4.1 Experimental design

4.1.1 Why an experiment?

In the natural and medical sciences, the use of experiments has always been a popular way of enriching our understanding of causal processes. The experimental method has been employed a lot less in social sciences, with the notable exception of psychology. During the last few decades, however, there has been increased attention for using experiments to enhance our causal knowledge of social phenomenon (Falk and Heckman 2009, 535). Webster and Sell argue that it will not take long before “understanding experiments is an important part of every social scientist’s professional skills” (2007, 7).

The biggest benefit of the experimental method is that it is an artificial method. This entails that they enable the researcher to observe data in a constructed situation, rather than a natural situation. Consequently, experiments allow for the inclusion of the independent variable(s) of interest, while excluding potential confounding factors. Therefore, the theoretical principle of interest is being isolated, allowing for direct comparison.\textsuperscript{11} Another important feature of experiments is random assignment of treatment and/or control. If we can speak of randomization, the errors that may occur are distributed equally over the different groups. Therefore, the measured differences between experimental groups/control group is due to the treatment, and not due to uncontrolled factors. Due to these characteristics of being artificial rather controlled, experiments also easily allow for replication (Webster and Sell 2007, 11-12; Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 70-76). Therefore, experiments can be defined as “a research design in which the researcher both controls and randomly assigns values of the independent variable to the participants” (Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 72).

\textsuperscript{11} Most often, this is a comparison between a baseline/control and experimental/treatment, but in this case it is between two treatment groups.
Perhaps most importantly, experiments are highly useful for examining the temporal order of phenomena, due to their artificiality. In natural settings, it is often hard to separate cause and effect (Webster and Sell 2007, 13, Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 75). For example, if one establishes a correlation between development and democracy, it is hard to figure out what is the cause, and what is the effect. In experiments, antecedent and consequence can thus clearly be disentangled, which is more difficult in natural research, as in that type of research the units of observation are subject to confounders or other pre-existing contextual traits.

Given these advantages, I argue that the experimental design, and more specifically one using surveys, is a highly adequate way to distinguish the effects of threats framed as either realistic or symbolic. I will be in control of the independent variable, which aims to “prime” the respondents to think about migration in either realistic or symbolic terms. Establishing a causal effect and more importantly, the causal direction, is important because we have little insight in the relationship between realistic and symbolic threat, and attitudes. There is the correlational study by Obaidi et al. (2018), but it is unsure what exactly causes what, which these authors also mention as their study’s most important limitation. They argue that it “would be ideal for assessing causality if future work were to experimentally manipulate the constructs [they] examined” (2018, 30). Importantly, they note that there are important ethical considerations that have to be taken into account when doing such manipulations. This will be discussed later in this chapter. Naturally, there are also other drawbacks regarding the choice of this research design. These will also be elaborated later on.

4.1.2 The procedure
97 people were recruited through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to participate in a survey on their views on immigration, in exchange for $1.50 per respondent. First, the respondents were asked for their nationality and age, in order to ensure the participation of EU citizens older than 18 only. When qualified, they were randomly distributed among two groups; the two treatment groups inducing the independent variable. One group’s participants saw a “news article” portraying immigration as a realistic threat, especially related to the job market. It also included a picture of a waiting line in front of a job center. The other group saw a different “news article”, depicting immigration as a symbolic threat, especially related to culture. This article incorporated a photo of two women wearing a burqa. After presenting the participants with their respective treatment, they were all asked the same questions about immigration and related topics in a short survey. These questions pertained to the dependent variable, implicitly attempting to measure the respondents’ degrees of outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes. After the participants submitted their answers, they were asked how they perceived the treatment they were given, as a matter of test-of-design to increase internal validity. Finally, they were thanked for their participation and they were told that the “news articles” were fabricated. They were also provided with some links containing more nuanced
reports on the European migration issue. See figure 4.1 for an schematic overview of this research’s experiment.

Figure 4.1 The procedure of the experiment

4.2 Sampling
4.2.1 Method of recruitment
Participants have thus been recruited using MTurk, a data-collection service that employs workers to complete online tasks, or Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs), one of them being surveys. Workers are paid a small amount of money for their work. The use of MTurk has rapidly become an ordinary form of data collection: a Google Scholar search for “Mechanical Turk” currently leads to about 20,000 results, and counting (McCredie and Morey 2018).

There are some reservations regarding data quality, for example the lack of attentiveness, lack of supervision, and possible distractions (Ibid; Chandler and Shapiro 2016). Moreover, the fairly small amount of money each worker is paid per HIT makes it tempting for them to complete as
many tasks as quickly as possible, leading to biased or low-quality results (McCredie and Morey 2018). They may also use other sources (such as googling their responses to survey questions) that have the potential to interfere with the study’s quality (Ibid).

Nevertheless, MTurk is generally seen as a platform that allows for the collection of high-quality and internally consistent data (see McCredie and Morey 2018, 1-2 for an overview). Workers generally follow the instructions they are given quite accurately, mitigating the potential problem of cheating. This is also demonstrated by workers’ good results in post-test manipulation checks (Ibid, 2). Although getting a near-perfect representative sample is not a primary objective of this study (see below), it can be noted that MTurk samples are generally more representative than student samples, at least in demographic terms (Ibid; Falk and Heckman 2009). Yet, at least in the United States, workers seem to be slightly younger and higher educated than the general population as a whole (Ibid)\textsuperscript{12}

4.2.2 Generalizability, random sampling and random assignment

As was argued before, experiments have strong internal validity, meaning that we can draw conclusions about causal inference with high certainty (Kellsted and Whitten 2013, 76). Importantly, this ties into the distinction between random sampling and random assignment (Ibid). Random assignment entails that the participants in the experiment are distributed equally and randomly among the different experimental and/or control groups. In other words, all participants in the survey have the same chance to receive a particular value for the independent variable. In the case of this survey, therefore, this would mean that the participants in the MTurk survey all have the same chance to be assigned to the realistic and symbolic threat article. Random sampling, on the other hand, refers to the chance of the participants being selected out of their respective population. If sampling is truly random, each individual in the population has an equal chance to be selected for participation. This research does not make use of random sampling, as some individuals in the population (humans) are more likely to participate in MTurk than others. Even though MTurk samples are argued to be more representative than student samples, it would still be dangerous to infer the results of this experiment to the population as a whole.

Specifically, this research makes use of a survey experiment design, which intends to “reap the benefits of both random assignment to treatment groups, and hence have high internal validity, as well as the benefits of a random sample, and hence have high external validity” (Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 77). However, as MTurk is only a sub-set from the actual population (humans), I can only extend this external validity to the population of MTurk workers. Furthermore, as I am interested in looking into how different framings of threat can have different consequences, I am not interested in generalization as much as one usually is in survey research. Yet, if the sample proves to

\textsuperscript{12} For more detailed differences on personality traits of workers, see McCredie and Morey (2018, 2)
be representative regarding age, gender, and nationality, I might be able to draw some conclusions about the general population as well, naturally with some side notes (see the limitations section for a more extensive discussion on this). Finally, it must be noted that this thesis goes beyond the immigration debate, as it attempts to make claims about threat and not the academic discussions on immigration per se. The primary objective is to empirically deepen our knowledge about threat, although increasing our understanding of the immigration debate is an interesting, though not essential outcome.

4.3 Operationalization and the survey

4.3.1 Independent and dependent variables

*Independent variable: realistic and symbolic threat*

I have constructed the treatment, or independent variable, myself by fabricating two "news articles" (see Appendix C)\(^{13}\) containing two respective descriptions of the consequences of immigration to the EU. The article containing the realistic scenario made reference to the current job situation, the costs of immigrants, and rising current and future unemployment. Additionally, it contained a photo of a queue before an employment agency, emphasizing the situation. The article constituting the symbolic threat was mostly about culture, and the ostensible incompatibility between European culture and the immigrants’ cultures. It mentioned views towards women and gay rights, and argued that immigration poses a threat to European culture, norms and values, and Christianity. The article further consisted of a picture of two women in a burqa, accentuating the cultural threat. These two articles were based on the theory; the realistic threat treatment was very much tailored towards job security, employment and welfare, whereas the symbolic threat treatment was pertaining to incompatibilities of cultures, norms, values, identities and religions. I have made the choice only to focus on threats to welfare and job security because it would be too difficult and murky to construct an “article” containing both threats to personal security, well-being (i.e. framing immigrants as dangerous people) while at the same time emphasizing their economic threat. This will be discussed more extensively in the concluding chapter.

In my view, it is likely that many people in the sample saw immigration as a threat. To some degree, this was necessary because otherwise the treatment for both groups would have run the risk of being too subtle. Additionally, I think there are clear differences between the two treatment groups. The realistic threat group is clearly describing issues related to job security and welfare, whereas the symbolic threat group discusses issues of culture and identity. These are very separate fields, but they are still pertaining to the same threat: immigration.

---

\(^{13}\) These articles are totally fabricated and only loosely based on facts. The info was partly constructed by myself and partly obtained from anti-immigration websites.
Dependent variables: outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes

The dependent variables were analyzed using two different “stages” of attitudinal outcomes. First, respondents were asked a number of survey questions measuring their degree of outgroup hostilities, specified per the theoretical response to realistic and symbolic threats. In other words, these questions referred to the various sorts of outgroup hostilities listed in paragraph 3.1. One “hostile response” was measured by two questions each. The questions were related to immigration, in order to keep the threat-priming function of the treatments as intact as possible.

Second, the participants were presented with two statements measuring the difference between violent attitudes between the two groups. Violent attitudes can in this case be seen as either one step further in the causal chain from threat to outgroup hostilities, or as a direct consequence of threat. They were measured using two standard questions loosely based on the literature that discusses how to capture these types of attitudes (e.g. Dahlberg et al. 2005, 14-38; Brand and Anastasio 2006; Bizumic et al. 2013; and Blumberg et al. 2017). Due to the limited length of the survey, only two questions pertaining to violent attitudes could be asked, while it would be ideal to adhere to a more common broad range. The questions about violent attitudes deviate to some extent from the immigration debate, as it is hard to formulate sensible questions related to both violent attitudes and immigration.

4.3.2 The survey questions

The dependent variables, outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes, are further operationalized in the survey questions. As mentioned earlier, for measuring outgroup hostilities, two questions each refer to one type of response to threat. For measuring violent attitudes there are also two questions. The full list of questions is provided in the Appendix, along with the other components of the survey, such as the treatments and the consent form. Figure 4.2 consists of a schematic overview of the questions, along with the specific corresponding theorized threat-related response we should expect. The table also includes a post-test question aiming to increase robustness. This last question measures whether the respondents actually saw their respective form of threat (realistic or symbolic) really as such. All questions were answered using a 7-point Likert scale from -3 (strongly agree) to 3 (strongly disagree), with some questions receiving a reversed scoring ([R]).

---

14 It is given the context difficult if not impossible to measures one’s degree of aggression, let alone preferences for genocide or mutilation, if I would have wanted to. Therefore, not all of the hostile responses discussed by Stephan et al. (2009:22) have been included in the survey.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation ((\mu_r ) equals mean of the realistic group; (\mu_s ) equals mean of the symbolic group)</th>
<th>Hypothesis and code</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectation: lower scores (i.e. more strongly agreeing) for those exposed to the realistic threat article: H1: (\mu_r &lt; \mu_s) H2: (\mu_r &lt; \mu_s)</td>
<td>H1: NEG1</td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>“In order to deal with the immigration issue, the EU should make concessions when negotiating with non-EU states, if necessary”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H1: NEG2</td>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>“It is not acceptable to compromise our values when negotiating with regimes that violate human rights in order to stop the stream of immigrants to Europe” [R]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H2: INFAV1</td>
<td>Ingroup favoritism</td>
<td>“Immigrants should first prove their value to our society before they can receive government benefits”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H2: INFAV2</td>
<td>Ingroup favoritism</td>
<td>“We should first take care of our own people’s needs before those of immigrants”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation: lower scores (i.e. more strongly agreeing) for those exposed to the symbolic threat article: H3: (\mu_s &lt; \mu_r) H4: (\mu_s &lt; \mu_r)</td>
<td>H3: MOREX1</td>
<td>Moral exclusion</td>
<td>“European culture should be an example for other cultures”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H3: MOREX2</td>
<td>Moral exclusion</td>
<td>“As long as immigrants follow the law, they can hold on to their own values” [R]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H4: DECEM1</td>
<td>Decreased empathy</td>
<td>“I feel sorry for people who are forced to migrate to Europe” [R]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H4: DECEM2</td>
<td>Decreased empathy</td>
<td>“I don’t understand why people are having difficulties integrating in Europe”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No theoretical expectation (lower scores indicate more prejudiced attitudes): H5: (\mu_r = \mu_s)</td>
<td>H5: PREJ1</td>
<td>Prejudice</td>
<td>“I would not have a problem with living next to an immigrant family” [R]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H5: PREJ2</td>
<td>Prejudice</td>
<td>“Immigrants are more prone to commit crimes than native Europeans”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No theoretical expectation (lower scores indicate more violent attitudes) H6: (\mu_r = \mu_s)</td>
<td>H6: VATT1</td>
<td>Violent attitudes</td>
<td>“It is justifiable to use violence against a cause”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H7: VATT2</td>
<td>Violent attitudes</td>
<td>“It is justified for European countries to use or support military force to help stop migration to Europe”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation: those exposed to a realistic threat should have thought more about job security and the economy; those exposed to the symbolic threat should have thought more about European culture and norms and values</td>
<td>TOD</td>
<td>Test of design</td>
<td>After reading the news article in the beginning of this survey, I mostly thought about:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Immigration (0 to 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Job security (0 to 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- European culture (0 to 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The economy (0 to 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Norms and values (0 to 10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2: The survey questions operationalized

The questions were pre-tested using a pilot survey done with fellow students and peers outside social science. The pilot resulted in some considerable changes to the framing of the questions. It must be noted that these questions are just a way of measuring attitudes, and not behavior. So whereas individuals may have different attitudes following their exposure to different types of threat, they may not engage in behaviorally corresponding actions. This will be discussed more in depth later on.
4.3.3 Validity of the variables

In these types of research, validity of the measurements is key. This entails that the measure should accurately represent the concept that it intends to measure (Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 101). In this case, this comes down to the validity of the treatment (independent variable) and the survey questions (dependent variable).

Firstly, experiments sometimes get the criticism that some relationships can’t be studied by using an experimental design, because the independent variable cannot be controlled and assigned randomly (Ibid, 78; Falk and Heckman 2009). I would argue that this is not so much an issue in this research, as I am in control of the independent variable to a very large extent, and random distribution is secured through the method of recruitment (MTurk). There are, however, two major assumptions concerned with this. I am firstly assuming that the “articles” that I have constructed, are, in fact representations of the “threat” of immigration in realistic and symbolic way, respectively, and I am secondly assuming that the respondents will actually perceive their respective “article” the way they are “supposed” to. I have addressed the first assumption by keeping a number of items in the treatment constant, such as the number of paragraphs, the size of the picture, the language (some sentences have the exact same buildup), and font (size). I have addressed the second assumption by including the test-of-design question on how the participants perceived their respective threat frame. The results of this test will be discussed in 5.2.

Moving to the dependent variable, the main question is: did the questions capture the concept it was intended to measure? For some indicators, we can be quite sure that validity problems are unlikely, such as the first item measuring pragmatism. In my view, “making concessions” to reach a certain goal is a logical way to assess pragmatic attitudes. For other questions, such as the second item measuring a decrease in empathy, this concern cannot be mitigated as much, as they are a bit more indirect. Therefore, this has to be kept in mind when the results are interpreted.

4.4 The data analysis

The answers the respondents provided in their respective surveys were stored in Qualtrics, where the survey was hosted, and subsequently analyzed using the statistical open source program R. The data are analyzed using two types of datasets: the original sample, meaning, the 7-point Likert scale data ranging from -3 (strongly agree) to 3 (strongly disagree) that the respondents originally provided; and a collapsed sample, in which the variables could only take the value of ’agree’ [-1], ’neutral’ [0], and ’disagree’ [1].

The data were analyzed using both a Mann-Whitney test (MW), and a regular T-

---

15 For example, how gender influences political participation.
16 The disadvantage of Qualtrics is that there is a maximum amount of respondents (100) for the free version.
17 This entails that the values -3 (strongly agree), -2 (agree), and -1 (somewhat agree) were transformed to ‘agree’ (-1), 0 remained ‘neutral’, and 1 (somewhat disagree), 2 (disagree), and 3 (strongly disagree) were transformed to ‘disagree’ (1).] Though, it must be noted that some (Matell and Jacoby 1971; see e.g. Dolnicar 2013) don’t see collapsing data as something
test, suitable for ordinal data in case of normal distribution. The MW-test is one of the most commonly used non-parametric tests in the social and behavioral sciences (Nachar 2008). There are three criteria, or assumptions, for conducting a MW-test. First, the samples have to be drawn randomly from the same population; second, there must be independence between the two groups; and third, the collected data need to be ordinal or continuous in nature (Ibid, 15). As will be shown in the next chapter, each of these three assumptions are met. Yet, MW-tests are usually employed using even smaller samples than is the case here (sometimes even 10 to 20 participants), so I argue that using a T-test can still provide us with interesting results. Therefore, I would argue that there is value in conducting the analysis using both methods. In the end of the survey, there will be a post-survey test-of-design, in which respondents can select a value ranging from 0 to 10, indicating to what extent they perceived their respective “article” to be about. Again, these data will be analyzed using both a MW-test and a T-test.

4.5 Limitations and ethics

4.5.1 Causality, generalizability, and interpretation

As every empirical strategy suffers from its drawbacks, so does this experiment. As was argued, this design is well able to establish a causal relationship, and especially its direction. However, even if a clear causal effect in a particular direction is found, it does not rule out the possibility that there is also a reverse effect. For example, if I find that, say, symbolic threat clearly leads to moral exclusion, it can also very well be that there is an opposite effect, meaning that morally excluding people can lead individuals to see these excluded persons more as a threat. This entails a limitation for this study in the sense that, while we are able to draw directional causal inference, we should keep in mind that there are also parallel processes that work the exact opposite way.

A second weaker point of experiments is that they often suffer from low external validity, or generalizability. We can be quite certain that the causal effect under investigation takes place among the individuals participating in the survey, but can we be so sure for the population as a whole (Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 79-80; Webster and Sell 2007, 13-15)? There are two aspects to this. First, it must be noted that an experiment does not necessarily require a random sample of the population. The sample in question is usually one of convenience, meaning “this is more or less the group of people we could beg, coerce, entice, or cajole to participate” (Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 80). Therefore, we don’t know what we would find if we were to take a different sample from the population. A way to counter this is by replicating the experiment multiple times using exactly the same method but different samples, in order to see whether the causal relationship holds. Also, using

that changes the results significantly. Therefore, I would argue that it would make sense to use both a collapsed and uncollapsed set in the analysis.

18 Also known as Wilcoxon Rank Sum test, suitable for nonparametric ordinal data.
19 For some variables, a normal distribution was visible, although their statistical estimates indicated they were not.
MTurk rather than a student sample mitigates this issue (see above). A second problem with external validity related to the treatment is: is the treatment generalizable to the “normal” context? The treatment is “forced”, meaning that it may occur in a totally different way in daily life, or maybe won’t even occur at all. Therefore, due to experiments’ artificial setting, we may have to be careful, we may have to be concerned about finding the same results in a more real life setting (Ibid, 80-81; Falk and Heckman 2009). I would argue that this is indeed a potential problem, but not necessarily in this experiment. In daily life, people are exposed to a wide array of news sources (even though they may consciously and subconsciously select their potential sources of news), and even though these treatments take quite extreme forms, these are expressions we can observe in media. The aim of this research is to examine how the psychological responses to specific types of threat lead to specific attitudinal outcomes. I would argue that this may only be slightly compromised by the fact that news in experimental settings differs from news in the real world.

A third aspect of experiments that may be problematic is their interpretation. Sometimes, when experiments result in the finding that a particular X indeed causes Y, some argue that this means that this X is the most important predictor of Y. Naturally, this need not be the case; there can be many other X’es that can cause Y. In contrast to some other methods, experimental designs often do not determine which X has the strongest effect on Y (Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 82). In the case of this research, I am not arguing that threat - realistic and symbolic - is the most important determinant of outgroup hostilities or violent attitudes. I am arguing, though, that threat is potentially a significant predictor of these outcomes. This has also been shown by earlier literature, as was discussed earlier.

4.5.2 Ethical considerations
In some cases, experimental methods can lead to issues of a more ethical nature. These can be the consequence of poor design, or simply the arise of methodological dilemmas. Ethical issues become more obvious when thinking about the medical sciences: if patients with cancer would be randomly attributed to a treatment or a control group (no treatment), this would be ethically unacceptable, as every patient deserves his or her serious medical care and hence chance of recovery (Kellstedt and Whitten 2013, 81-82). According to Hegtvedt (2007, 146), four interrelated issues emerge when thinking about ethics in experiments. Firstly, research may objectivize their participants, meaning that the researcher treats his or her respondents as “subjects” or even “objects”. In this research, this is not really the case as the respondents are anonymously collected through MTurk, so there is no interaction between the researcher and the participants, other than via the survey itself. Secondly, treating participants as subjects or objects can lead individuals to feel distressed or resentful.

Secondly, various types of harm need to be taken into account, such as physical harm (which is very rare in social science); inconvenience (boring or time-consuming tasks); psychological harm
(negative effects such as anxiety, embarrassment, or guilt); social harm (reputation and relationships with others); and economic and legal harm (e.g. loss of money or economic opportunities; and e.g. involvement with law enforcement when investigating illegal behavior) (Hegvredt 2007, 148-149). I would argue that only psychological harm may be a slight problem, but this is countered by providing the participants with a sincere post-survey message that these articles were not real, which also contained a few links with nuanced accounts on the European immigration debate.

Third, there may be coercive, exploitative or intrusive practices going on. When the researcher has a reward for participation, there is a power imbalance between the researcher and participant. The researcher must therefore minimize the emphasis on the reward. The researcher must also understand that the respondents are free to decline participation, as they are volunteers. Once participating, the respondents cannot be exploited by being asked questions they were not told about beforehand, or by blocking their withdrawal from the experiment. Moreover, the researcher must bear in mind that the participant is sharing very sensitive information, and that they spend their time and energy on it (Ibid, 149-150). In this experiment, the utmost has been done to address these issues: the reward is not emphasized (as it is standard in MTurk), participants could quit at any time for any reason (and they were informed about this), and, again, their responses were treated totally anonymously.

Fourth, there are issues related to the participant’s privacy and confidentiality, as they may sometimes be asked for information that they like to be kept private. In this vein, it is essential to promise the respondent that their data will be treated confidentially and anonymously (Ibid, 150-52). In the case of this experiment, both confidentiality and anonymity is already embedded in the MTurk system. I will not be able to identify the participants in any way, other than if they contact me after the experiment.

Fifthly, there is the issue of deception, which refers to “acts of providing false information or withholding information intended deliberately to mislead others into believing that something is untrue” (Ibid, 152). A rule of thumb here can be that “[d]eception should not cause discomfort at a level that would have prevented people from participating had they known fully in advance what the study would involve” (Ibid, 154). A good way to mitigate the effects of deception are the processes of dehoaxing and desensitizing (Ibid, 155-156). Dehoaxing involves post-experiment informing of the participants about the true aims of the study. Desensitizing is the attempt to eliminate any harm that the study, and more specifically the deception, may have engendered, with the goal of restoring a feeling of positive well-being. Both dehoaxing, in the form of a post-test message that the “articles” were fabricated, and desensitizing, in terms of providing the participants with nuanced info on the European immigration debate, have been addressed.

Finally, there is the issue of payment, for which MTurk sometimes receives criticism (Haug 2017). In its nature, the use of MTurk is inseparable from paying participants. As was described
earlier, each successful respondent was paid $1.50 for his or her time to fill in the survey. The person spending the longest time spent about 8 minutes (equivalent to $11.25 per hour) filling in the survey, although the average was about 4 to 5 minutes (between $22.50 and $18, respectively). Even taking into account the person who spent most time filling in the survey, the amount of money he or she received was still well above the $US minimum wage of $7.25$^{20}$

$^{20}$And, in fact, California’s minimum wage of $10, see LA Times (2018).
5. Analysis

In this chapter, the results of this study will be presented. There will first be an overview of the experiment’s descriptive statistics, such as demographics and the general, “raw” means. Secondly, the data will be statistically scrutinized, with first an assessment of the test of design, and subsequently analyses of the dependent variables of this study - outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes. This will be done using the original dataset, and a collapsed one.

5.1 Descriptives

A total of 97 respondents, recruited through MTurk, successfully participated in the survey hosted on Qualtrics. Initially 103 respondents completed the survey; two respondents were left out for not being able to provide an MTurk WorkerID (and filling in the survey from the same IP address in Nigeria), whereas two other responses were omitted because this participant filled in the survey twice. One other person was left out for not taking the survey seriously (both in terms of responses and the test of design), and another participant was rejected as he did not live in the EU. The successful respondents were paid $1.50 each. This was arguably a relatively high reward due to the average response time of less than 5 minutes per HIT. The survey was posted on April 19th, 2018, around 11.40 A.M. and the HITs were completed on the same day around 7 hours later.

The mean age of the sample was 30.71 years (standard deviation (hereafter SD): 8.11) and there was substantial variation in terms of the respondents backgrounds. Though mostly men (72 male, 24 female, 1 other), the level of education was well-distributed. The most frequently stated educational background of the respondents was a bachelor’s degree (26), with ‘some college but no degree’ (23) and a master’s degree (22) coming second and third. In terms of geographical diversity, respondents came...
from 14 different countries, with the United Kingdom being most dominant (38). As can be seen in figure 5.3 below, there was no dominance by a particular EU region.

![Figure 5.3. Spatial distribution of respondents](image)
The darker the green, the more respondents originated in that country. Light blue are EU countries from which no participants were recruited. Grey are non-EU states.

Of the 97 respondents, 51 were shown the realistic threat article; the other 46 saw the symbolic threat article. What immediately stands out (see table 5.1 below) is that most people seem to be in favor of the EU making concessions when negotiating with non-EU states, to curb the immigration issue. Interestingly, on average most people were against compromising “our” values when negotiating with regimes that violate human rights. Secondly, most participants thought that immigrants should first prove their value to our society before they can receive government benefits, and they generally also felt that “we” should first take care of the needs of “our own people,” before those of immigrants.
Thirdly, the items measuring moral exclusion provided a mixed picture. Most respondents thought that European culture should be an example for other cultures, but even more argued that if immigrants follow the law, they can hold on to their own values. Fourthly, regarding empathy, the dominant view was that the participants could empathize with those who are forced to migrate to Europe, and they generally showed their understanding for why immigrants can have difficulties integrating in European societies. Fifthly, it seemed that most participants were not prejudiced towards immigrants in the sense that they would not have problems with having them as neighbors. On the other hand, on the question of whether immigrants are more prone to commit crimes than Europeans, they provided varied responses: on average, only a slight majority was against this statement. Finally, in terms of violent attitudes, there was quite a difference between ‘general’ violence and state violence. Whereas most respondents were on average against the use of violence in general, they were slightly agreeing with the statement of whether it is justified for European countries to use or support military force in the “struggle” against immigration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>NEG1</th>
<th>NEG2</th>
<th>INFAV1</th>
<th>INFAV2</th>
<th>MOREX1</th>
<th>MOREX2</th>
<th>DECEM1</th>
<th>DECEM2</th>
<th>PREJ1</th>
<th>PREJ2</th>
<th>VATT1</th>
<th>VATT2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1. Frequency table of the respondents’ answers
NEG = pragmatism, INFAV = ingroup favoritism, MOREX = moral exclusion, DECEM = decreased empathy, PREJ = prejudice and VATT = violent attitudes.

5.2 In depth analysis

The aim of this study is to assess whether those exposed to a realistic threat show different kinds and degrees of outgroup hostilities and violent attitudes than those exposed to a symbolic threat. Statistically, this entails to analyze the differences in means between the realistic and symbolic threat ‘groups’. Six indicators, each measured by two questions, or ‘items’, therefore have to be compared along threat group type. In order to increase internal validity, the analysis was performed on both an uncollapsed (7-point Likert scale ranging from -3 to 3) and collapsed set (converted version, creating only ‘agree’ [-1], ‘neutral’ [0], and ‘disagree’ [1]), as was explained in the previous chapter. Data have been analyzed using both a Mann-Whitney test (MW), suitable for nonparametric ordinal data], and a regular T-test, suitable for ordinal data in case of normal distribution. There are no missing data, therefore the amount of observations (N) is equal to 97 for every indicator. Also, every answering category was filled in for every survey question.

This section will begin with the analyzing the results of the test of design, to see assess to which degree the participants perceived their respective “article” to be pertaining to either realistic or symbolic
threat. Subsequently, each of the hypotheses that were mentioned in Chapter 3 will be analyzed. For every hypothesis, the null hypothesis is that the means of the realistic and symbolic groups are the same (H0: μr = μs). Corresponding with the theoretical expectations, the alternative hypotheses are either that one mean is larger than the other (for hypotheses 1 to 4) or that the means are different (for hypotheses 5 and 6). See the table below. For hypotheses 1 to 4, therefore, we can theoretically employ a one-tailed significant test, as we have an expectation of the ‘direction’ of the difference. For hypotheses 5 and 6, we have to use a two-tailed test as there is no theoretical expectation. This will be discussed more in detail below. But first, let us consider the test of design.

5.2.1 Test of design

At the end of the survey, the respondents were asked how they perceived the articles they read in the beginning, in order to assess whether the article, in fact, ‘primed’ a sense of realistic and symbolic threat (i.e. the independent variable), respectively. As can be seen in the table below, the mean for “immigration” (i.e. whether the participants perceived their article to be about immigration), is slightly higher for the symbolic group, although this difference is statistically only significant on the α = .1 level (T-test p = .053). Comparing the means of the other categories, “job security”, “European culture”, “the economy”, and “norms and values” reveals a pattern we would expect given the different types of treatment. The differences between categories were all large (|Δ| > 2.2) and significant (T-test p < .0001). This indicates that, indeed, the treatment the participants received corresponded to a substantial degree to their perception of these treatments. This is a positive outcome for this validity of the independent variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Immigration</th>
<th>Job security</th>
<th>European culture</th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Norms and values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall mean</td>
<td>7.21 (2.20)</td>
<td>4.20 (3.10)</td>
<td>4.80 (2.94)</td>
<td>4.80 (2.81)</td>
<td>5.5 (2.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic mean</td>
<td>6.80 (2.48)</td>
<td>5.90 (2.68)</td>
<td>3.67 (2.85)</td>
<td>5.86 (2.56)</td>
<td>4.33 (2.67)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(standard deviation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic mean</td>
<td>7.65 (1.75)</td>
<td>2.30 (2.37)</td>
<td>6.07 (2.50)</td>
<td>3.65 (2.64)</td>
<td>6.89 (2.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(standard deviation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute mean</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>difference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significancea</td>
<td>.053*</td>
<td>&lt; .0001</td>
<td>&lt; .0001</td>
<td>&lt; .0001</td>
<td>&lt; .0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2. Test of design featuring one general category (immigration), two related to realistic threat (job security, the economy) and two related to symbolic threat (European culture and norms and values).

Answering categories ranged from 0 (not thinking about it at all) to 10 (thinking about it a lot).

* a = .1, ** a = .05, *** a = .01

a) Two-tailed test for “immigration”, one-sided for the other four.

5.2.2 Dependent variable 1: outgroup hostilities

Hypothesis 1: pragmatism

As can be seen in tables 5.3 and 5.4 there is a substantial difference in means between the realistic and symbolic groups for the first item measuring the participants’ inclination towards pragmatism (NEG1:
uncollapsed $|\Delta| = .5674$; collapsed $|\Delta| = .3884$), but a much smaller difference in means for the second item (NEG2; uncollapsed $|\Delta| = .1238$; collapsed $|\Delta| = .0055$). This entails that those exposed to the realistic frame were on average more supportive of these two statements. Both mean differences are in line with their expected theoretical ‘direction’, allowing us to perform a one-tailed significance test.

Performing such an analysis of the uncollapsed data shows that the mean difference on the first item is significant on the $\alpha = .05$ level (MW $p = .020$; T-test $p = .019$), meaning that individuals exposed to the realistic threat frame are more willing to negotiate, and thus exhibit a more pragmatic attitude, than those exposed to the symbolic threat frame. These results become even stronger when the data are collapsed (MW $p = .008$; T-test $p = .007$); i.e. they are significant on the $\alpha = .01$ level. Due to the small difference in means, the other item attempting to pragmatism (NEG2) shows no significance on either of the two tests. Due to the significant result on the first item, we can provide substantial support for H1. See tables 5.3 and 5.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall mean (standard deviation)</th>
<th>NEG1</th>
<th>NEG2</th>
<th>INFAV1</th>
<th>INFAV2</th>
<th>MOREX1</th>
<th>MOREX2</th>
<th>DECEM1</th>
<th>DECEM2</th>
<th>PREJ1</th>
<th>PREJ2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1.35)</td>
<td>1.113</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.628</td>
<td>0.7526</td>
<td>-0.8041</td>
<td>-1.115</td>
<td>-1.309</td>
<td>-1.443</td>
<td>-1.402</td>
<td>3.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.59)</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic group mean (n=51) (standard deviation)</td>
<td>-0.980</td>
<td>-0.941</td>
<td>0.4314</td>
<td>-0.6863</td>
<td>-0.6471</td>
<td>-1.647</td>
<td>-1.510</td>
<td>-0.392</td>
<td>-1.608</td>
<td>5.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.26)</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic group mean (n=46) (standard deviation)</td>
<td>-1.413</td>
<td>1.065</td>
<td>-0.8478</td>
<td>-0.8261</td>
<td>-0.9783</td>
<td>-1.370</td>
<td>-1.087</td>
<td>-2.609</td>
<td>-1.174</td>
<td>15.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.39)</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>1.51</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute mean difference $</td>
<td>\Delta</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>5.674</td>
<td>1.238</td>
<td>4.164</td>
<td>1.398</td>
<td>3.312</td>
<td>2.770</td>
<td>4.230</td>
<td>2.217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected direction?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance MW-test (1-tailed)*</td>
<td>.020**</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>0.398</td>
<td>0.572</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.251</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>0.295</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td>0.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance T-test (1-tailed)*</td>
<td>.019**</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>.685</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>.092*</td>
<td>.480</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3. Uncollapsed set.

* $\alpha = .1$, ** $\alpha = .05$, *** $\alpha = .01$

Coding ranged from -3 ("strongly agree") to 3 ("strongly disagree").

NEG = pragmatism, INFAV = ingroup favoritism, MOREX = moral exclusion, DECEM = decreased empathy, PREJ = prejudice and VATT = violent attitudes.

a) The difference is not expected given the theory (which is under-developed in this regard), but it is expected given the overall results that point to more “vicious” responses to symbolic threat. If one would perform a one-sided test given this tendency, PREJ1 would significantly be more associated with the symbolic threat group compared to the realistic threat group (T-test $p = .094$, $\alpha = .1$).

b) The direction of difference did not allow for a one-tailed test for INFAV1, INFAV2 and DECEM2.

Hypothesis 2: ingroup favoritism

The differences in means for ingroup favoritism, as can be seen in the table, go against the theoretical expectations. Both the first item (INFAV1: uncollapsed $|\Delta| = .4164$; collapsed $|\Delta| = .1952$) and the second item (INFAV2: uncollapsed $|\Delta| = .1398$; collapsed $|\Delta| = .1603$) show quite substantial differences in mean. However, given the theory, it was expected that the realistic group would show a lower value (i.e. more leaning towards “agree”) than the symbolic group. These counter-theoretical implications restrict us to employ a two-tailed significance test.
Neither of the two items’ mean differences is statistically significant, although INFAV1 would be significant on the $\alpha = .1$ level if we were employing a one-sided test (collapsed MW $p = 0.099$). However, as the differences in means goes in the opposite direction compared to what was expected, we have to be careful drawing conclusions from this. With these reservations in mind, the results do seem, however, to point towards a higher degree of ingroup favoritism for those exposed to the symbolic threat frame, vis-à-vis the realistic threat frame, which is the opposite of what was expected. Due to insignificance of the results we cannot provide evidence for H2. See tables 5.3 and 5.4.

**Hypothesis 3: moral exclusion**

As can be seen in tables 5.3 and 5.4, the direction of the mean differences for moral exclusion are consistent with our theoretical expectations. Due to one item being reverse scored, we would expect a higher value for the realistic threat group on MOREX1, and a higher value for the symbolic threat group on MOREX2. Both of these expectations seem to be accurate, with considerable mean differences (MOREX1: uncollapsed $|\Delta| = .3312$; collapsed $|\Delta| = .2059$. MOREX2: uncollapsed $|\Delta| = .2770$; collapsed $|\Delta| = .1322$). As both mean differences are in the ‘right’ direction, a one-tailed significance test is possible.

Conducting this analysis on the uncollapsed data shows that neither of the mean differences is statistically significant, both using an MW-test and a T-test. Using collapsed data, however, the mean difference of MOREX1 is significant on the $\alpha = .1$ level (MW $p = .063$; T-test $p = .091$). MOREX2 is not significant on any level. Although one cannot draw strong conclusions from a test with an $\alpha$ of .1, I would argue that the above shows that there are reasons to believe that those exposed to the symbolic threat frame show a greater tendency to be morally exclusive than those exposed to the realistic threat frame. Yet, it must be stressed that this claim cannot be made with a high degree of certainty. As MOREX1 is only significant on the $\alpha = .1$ level, we cannot with certainty reject the null hypothesis and therefore not accept H3. See tables 5.3 and 5.4.

**Hypothesis 4: decreased empathy**

On average, we would expect the participants exposed to the symbolic threat to experience a higher decrease in empathic attitudes than those who saw the realistic threat article. The average for DECEM1 points in that direction, showing a considerable mean difference (uncollapsed $|\Delta| = .423$; collapsed $|\Delta| = .1995$). For DECEM2, things seem to be different. The expectation for that item would be that those exposed to the symbolic threat have a lower score, but the opposite is the case, with a reasonably sized mean difference (uncollapsed $|\Delta| = .2217$; collapsed $|\Delta| = .2217$). Note that the means are identical in the collapsed and uncollapsed samples. Due to these mixed results, it is only possible to perform a one-tailed significance test for DECEM1 and thus not for DECEM2.
The statistical analysis of the mean differences provides an equally mixed picture. For DECEM1, no significant difference can be observed when using Mann-Whitney tests on the data. Employing a T-test, however, shows us that DECEM1 is significant on the $\alpha = .1$ level (uncollapsed T-test $p = .092$; collapsed T-test $p = .077$). DECEM2’s mean difference is not significant using any of the methods. Again, although an $\alpha$-level of .1 is not a reliable base for conclusions, it seems that a decrease in empathy, at least as it was operationalized in DECEM1, can be observed when individuals experience a symbolic threat; more so than when they are confronted with a realistic threat. Still, again, the evidence for this claim is not undisputed. [NOTE: DECEM2 may be pointing in the other direction due to ambiguity of the question, see discussion] As DECEM1 is only significant on the $\alpha = .1$ level, we cannot with certainty reject the null hypothesis and therefore not accept H4. See tables 5.3 and 5.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall mean (standard deviation)</th>
<th>NEG1</th>
<th>NEG2</th>
<th>INFAV1</th>
<th>INFAV2</th>
<th>MOREX1</th>
<th>MOREX2</th>
<th>DECEM1</th>
<th>DECEM2</th>
<th>PREJ1</th>
<th>PREJ2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-4433</td>
<td>-4536</td>
<td>-2887</td>
<td>-3505</td>
<td>-3918</td>
<td>-.7216</td>
<td>-.6701</td>
<td>.1443</td>
<td>-.6495</td>
<td>1.753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic group mean (n=51)</td>
<td>-6.275</td>
<td>-6.151</td>
<td>-1.961</td>
<td>-2.745</td>
<td>-2.941</td>
<td>-2.843</td>
<td>-2.747</td>
<td>.0392</td>
<td>-.1255</td>
<td>2.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(standard deviation)</td>
<td>(.66)</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
<td>(.89)</td>
<td>(.80)</td>
<td>(.76)</td>
<td>(.58)</td>
<td>(.55)</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
<td>(.60)</td>
<td>(.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic group mean (n=46)</td>
<td>-2.391</td>
<td>-2.465</td>
<td>-3.913</td>
<td>-4.348</td>
<td>-5.000</td>
<td>-5.652</td>
<td>-.5652</td>
<td>2.609</td>
<td>-5.652</td>
<td>2.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(standard deviation)</td>
<td>(.85)</td>
<td>(.84)</td>
<td>(.80)</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
<td>(.75)</td>
<td>(.71)</td>
<td>(.78)</td>
<td>(.85)</td>
<td>(.75)</td>
<td>(.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute mean difference $</td>
<td>\Delta</td>
<td></td>
<td>3884</td>
<td>0055</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1603</td>
<td>2059</td>
<td>1322</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected direction?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance MW-test (1-tailed)*</td>
<td>.008***</td>
<td>.486</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>063*</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance T-test1 (1-tailed)*</td>
<td>.009***</td>
<td>.487</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>091*</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>077*</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>3443</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4. Collapsed set.

The collapsed coding ranged from -1 ("strongly agree", "agree" and "somewhat agree") to 31 ("strongly disagree", "disagree" and "somewhat disagree"). 0 remained "neutral".

NEG = pragmatism, INFAV = ingroup favoritism, MOREX = moral exclusion, DECEM = decreased empathy, PREJ = prejudice and VATT = violent attitudes.

a) The difference is not expected given the theory (which is under-developed in this regard), but it is expected given the overall results that point to more "vicious" responses to symbolic threat. Yet, even if one were conducting one-tailed test, differences between realistic and symbolic groups would in neither PREJ1 nor PREJ2 be statistically significant.

b) The direction of difference did not allow for a one-tailed test for INFAV1, INFAV2 and DECEM2, and, as explained above, the two items measuring prejudice.

**Hypothesis 5: prejudice**

No theoretical expectations in terms of which of the two groups - realistic or symbolic - would show a higher degree of prejudice existed beforehand. The means of the two groups, however, differ quite substantially (PREJ1: uncollapsed $|\Delta| = .434$; collapsed $|\Delta| = .1603$. PREJ2: uncollapsed $|\Delta| = .436$; collapsed $|\Delta| = .1679$), and they both point in the same direction: the symbolic group shows, on average, a higher degree of prejudice. Interestingly enough, both mean differences have about the same size, despite one of them being reverse scored. Although initially not pertaining to a theoretical expectation, it can be argued that a one-tailed test is still applicable, as these two items, and the results of the experiment in general, seem to point to the symbolic group as showing most hostile attitudes.
Performing this test on the collapsed sample using both methods yields no significant results, both for PREJ1 and PREJ2. Conducting a T-test on the uncollapsed data, using an \( \alpha \)-level of .1, on PREJ, on the other hand, shows that there is a significant difference in means (uncollapsed T-test \( p = .094 \)) for this item. Once again, no hard conclusions can be drawn due to the significance level of \( \alpha = .1 \), but the results cautiously point in the direction symbolic threat leading to a higher extent of prejudice than realistic threat. As PREJ1 is only significant on the \( \alpha = .1 \) level, we cannot with certainty reject the null hypothesis and therefore not accept H5. See tables 5.3 and 5.4.

5.2.3 Dependent variable 2: violent attitudes

Given the overall dominance of symbolic threat as a predictor for outgroup hostilities, there are reasons to believe that those who saw the symbolic threat article are more likely to exhibit violent attitudes than those exposed to the realistic threat frame. I would argue that this allows us, after doing a two-tailed significance test, to conduct a one-tailed test as well. Once again, the data will be analyzed both in an uncollapsed and a collapsed set; and for both sets there will be a Mann-Whitney test and a T-test.

**Hypothesis 6: violent attitudes**

As can be seen in the table above, there are only small differences in means between the two groups. For the first item (VATT1), we can observe a small difference leaning towards more violent attitudes for the symbolic threat group (uncollapsed \( |\Delta| = .0559 \); collapsed \( |\Delta| = .0527 \)), whereas we can see an inversely directed mean difference for the second item (VATT2: uncollapsed \( |\Delta| = .0563 \); collapsed \( |\Delta| = .0674 \)). Statistical analysis shows no significant results for a difference in violent attitudes between the realistic and symbolic threat groups, using any of the methods and \( \alpha \)-levels, two-tailed and one-tailed. Therefore, as VATT1 and VATT2 are not significant on any level, we cannot reject the 0 hypothesis. Therefore, the results provide no support for H6. See tables 5.5 and 5.6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall mean (standard deviation)</th>
<th>(VATT1)</th>
<th>(VATT2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realistic group mean (n=51) (standard deviation)</td>
<td>.6598 (1.71)</td>
<td>.1443 (1.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic group mean (n=46) (standard deviation)</td>
<td>.6863 (1.78)</td>
<td>.1176 (1.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute mean difference (</td>
<td>\Delta</td>
<td>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected direction( ^2 )</td>
<td>Not applicable*</td>
<td>Not applicable*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance MW-test (2-tailed)( ^a )</td>
<td>.741</td>
<td>.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance T-test (2-tailed)( ^a )</td>
<td>.873</td>
<td>.880</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5. Uncollapsed set.

* \( \alpha = .1 \), ** \( \alpha = .05 \), *** \( \alpha = .01 \)

Coding ranged from -3 (“strongly agree”) to 3 (“strongly disagree”).

NEG = pragmatism, INFAV = ingroup favoritism, MOREX = moral exclusion, DECEM = decreased empathy, PREJ = prejudice and VATT = violent attitudes.

\( ^a \) Taking into account the results overall, that point to symbolic threats as leading to more “vicious” responses than realistic threats, it could be argued that we should see a stronger inclination toward violent attitudes for the symbolic group as well. The results here, however, support the theory in the sense that there is no difference between the realistic and symbolic groups regarding violent attitudes.

\( ^b \) Even if a one-sided test was conducted, the differences would not have been significant.
### Table 5.6. Collapsed set.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(VATT1)</th>
<th>(VATT2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall mean (standard deviation)</td>
<td>.2887 (.85)</td>
<td>.0515 (.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic group mean (n=51) (standard deviation)</td>
<td>3.137 (.81)</td>
<td>.0196 (.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic group mean (n=46) (standard deviation)</td>
<td>.2609 (.91)</td>
<td>.0870 (.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute mean difference</td>
<td>.0527</td>
<td>.0674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected direction?</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
<td>Not applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance MW-test (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td>.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance T-test1 (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td>.724</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* α = .1, ** α = .05, *** α = .01

The collapsed coding ranged from -1 ("strongly agree", “agree” and “somewhat agree”) to 1 ("strongly disagree”, “disagree” and “somewhat disagree”). 0 remained “neutral”.

NEG = pragmatism, INFAV = ingroup favoritism, MOREX = moral exclusion, DECEM = decreased empathy, PREJ = prejudice and VATT = violent attitudes.

a) Taking into account the results overall, that point to symbolic threats as leading to more “vicious” responses than realistic threats, it could be argued that we should see a stronger inclination toward violent attitudes for the symbolic group as well. The results here, however, support the theory in the sense that there is no difference between the realistic and symbolic groups regarding violent attitudes.

b) Even if a one-sided test was conducted, the differences would not have been significant.

### 5.3 Summary

Analyzing the “raw” differences of means between the realistic and symbolic groups paints an interesting picture. Although we cannot statistically establish this, it seems that generally, the symbolically framed threat of immigration leads to more hostile attitudes than its realistic counterpart. Realistic threats, on the other hand, seem to be more likely to lead to pragmatism, as is demonstrated by the statistically significant difference in mean for NEG1. For violent attitudes the results were very mixed, pointing to the conclusion that this study could not find a difference between realistic and symbolic threat frames regarding the support for or acceptance of violence. These results will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.
6. Discussion and conclusion

6.1 Discussion of the findings and this study’s limitations

The aim of this study was to answer the following research question: How do realistic and symbolic threat perceptions affect outgroup hostilities? It was hypothesized that realistic threats, related to individuals’ jobs, power, well-being and safety, were likely to lead to pragmatism and ingroup favoritism, and that symbolic threats, pertaining to people’s norms, morals, values, and identity, were more strongly associated with moral exclusion and a decrease in empathy. This study also attempted to find out which of these types of threat would lead to a higher degree of prejudice and violent attitudes, of which there was no prior theoretical expectation. These hypotheses were tested through the use of a survey-experimental design (n = 97) regarding the European immigration debate, making use of multiple methodological measures. In this experiment, two groups were created: one group of people who were exposed to an “article” framing immigration to the EU as a realistic threat; and another group of individuals who saw an “article” portraying it as a symbolic threat. All participants were then subjected to the same questionnaire.

The analysis showed that those exposed to the realistic threat indeed exhibited a more pragmatic attitude than those exposed to the symbolic threat, in the sense that the former individuals were more willing to negotiate to address the immigration issue. The most appealing theoretical argument behind this is that realistic threats cause people to find ways to cope with the treat, causing them to use strategies of either withdrawal, avoidance, aggression, or negotiation (Stephan et al. 2009).

Examining ingroup favoritism led to counter-theoretical observations: individuals exposed to the symbolic threat showed higher incidence of favoring their ingroup, in terms of average (not in terms of statistical significance). This is surprising because there is a theoretical association between ingroup favoritism and realistic threat, as this type of threat leads people to protect the welfare of their group (Morrison and Ybarra 2008). A potential explanation for this result might be the overall finding that symbolic threats seem to lead to more vicious responses in general21, which possibly also leads to a higher degree of ingroup favoritism. It must be noted, though, that this difference between the realistic and symbolic threat group was not statistically significant.

Regarding moral exclusion, it was found that those exposed to a symbolic threat did indeed morally exclude others to a higher degree than those who read the realistic threat article, although this was only observed using one way of measurement on the a = .1 level. Though statistically not robust, this somewhat confirms the theoretical argument that those exposed to a symbolic threat tend to want to protect the cultural symbols of the ingroup against intrusion from the outgroup, in

21 Which is also noted by Stephan et al. (2009, 22).
which no middle ground is possible (McLaren 2003). What remains as an option, then, is to morally exclude said outgroup.

It was also hypothesized that symbolic threat would lead to a decrease in empathy, vis-à-vis those exposed to the realistic threat. The analysis provided a mixed picture. For one item measuring decreased empathy, it is indeed shown that the symbolic threat led to a lower expression of empathy than the realistic threat (statistically significant on the $\alpha = .1$ level). For the other item a reverse mean difference was observed, but this different was not significant. The ambiguity surrounding the findings go hand in hand with the theoretical uncleanness of this variable. Decreasing empathy after symbolic threat has been observed by others, but there has been no previous account on why this could be. On explanation might be that people already have a low, predisposed degree of empathy for cultural outgroups in the first place, and a symbolic threat emphasizes deepens these cleavages. A reason why the second item recorded a reverse effect may have been a poor fit between the statement (“I don’t understand why people are having difficulties integrating in Europe”) and peoples’ interpretation. A more simple measure, such as the other statement for measuring decreased empathy, would perhaps have led to a more streamlined outcome.

There was no expected difference between the realistic and symbolic group regarding prejudice. As was shown in paragraph 3.2.2, there were logical causal explanations for both types of threat leading to an increase in prejudice. Yet, as was mentioned earlier, the results in the overall study indicate that symbolic threats may lead to more vicious responses in general than their realistic counterparts, which arguably allows for the conduct of one-tailed statistical tests. This found that symbolic threats indeed seem to lead to a higher degree of prejudice, although, again the only statistically significant result is on the $\alpha = .1$ level. An explanation for this is that symbolic threats expose deeply held value conflicts, which can perhaps more easily lead to prejudiced views than realistic threats.

Finally, and somewhat surprisingly given the overall seemingly stronger degree of viciousness of the symbolic threat group, this study could not establish a difference between the two groups in terms of the respondents’ attitudes toward the use of violence. The two items measuring violent attitudes are both pointed in a different direction and their differences are small and statistically not significant. This counters the direct theoretical connection between threat and violent attitudes, and shows support for the mediating role that other, more benign, outgroup hostilities can play.

There are important limitations to this research. First, as was already touched upon in the theoretical section, this study did not differentiate between group threats and individual threats. Indeed, threats to the group as a whole may be qualitatively very distinct from those to individuals. This may also have had its impact on the treatment constructed for the experiment; it may be that one of the two treatment groups referred to threats on a more or less aggregated level, thereby interfering with the results.
Secondly, an obvious weaker point of this study is the absence of a control group. Although this was initially planned, practical limitations led to the conclusion that it would be more appealing to do a study comparing realistic to symbolic threats. It is quite likely that threat leads to more hostile responses compared to a non-threatening baseline scenario, but it would still be interesting to see differences between the realistic and symbolic group, and how this relates to a “neutral” average. For instance, in the present study, we don’t know whether individuals’ pragmatism actually increased after being exposed to the realistic threat, or whether it was in fact the pragmatism of those exposed to the symbolic threat that decreased. A baseline average, obtained through a control group, would shed more light on this.

Another limitation may be the poly-interpretability of some of the questions. Whereas some questions were quite clear (e.g. “It is acceptable to use violence for a just cause” or “Immigrants are more prone to commit crimes than native Europeans”), others could have been victim to ambiguity (“I don’t understand why people are having difficulties integrating in Europe” or “It is justified for European countries to use or support military force to help stop migration to Europe”). More extensive piloting or pretesting could perhaps have addressed this issue, but it is also an inherent part of doing surveys: some people may not understand the question in the same way as the researcher wants it to be understood.

In more general terms, the relatively small n of 97 can be seen as a limitation. The same practical reasons that led to the omitting of the control group, prohibited a larger amount of people to be recruited. Looking at the raw data, one can see that there are quite clear differences, so a slightly larger n, of, say, 150 could have led to more significant results. Also, the resulting p-values that were obtained could have been lower, and we would most likely have been able to draw conclusions on the α = .05 level for the variables we now used a α = .1 level for.

Another limitation is that replication of this study is difficult, given the context. Although the study is procedurally quite easy to replicate, contextual variables such as the current state of the immigration debate, heightened tensions due to for example the situation in the Middle East or terrorism on European soil, or the economic climate. Yet, I would argue that it would theoretically be even more interesting to conduct an experiment similar this in a different Zeitgeist, for example when there is an economic downturn. If we observe similar patterns that hold in different circumstances, this will add substance to the theoretical arguments made here.

There are also some alternative explanations for why the realistic threat group produced different types of outgroup hostilities than the symbolic threat group. For example, the symbolic threat may have been “stronger” in general, provoking more hostile responses. And as pragmatism is not really a ‘hostile’ response, but more a way to deal with the threat of economic migrants, this can explain why we can see such a significant result on this indicator. It may also be that the symbolic features of the immigration debate have received a disproportionate amount of media attention.
compared to the realistic features, causing people to be “primed” towards the former in the first place. In terms of the participants, it is possible that, as the sample mostly consisted of mid- to higher educated individuals, these people saw immigration less as a realistic threat to begin with, because their jobs are generally not the ones that are being threatened. Also, as there is a large amount of people from the UK in the sample, these individuals may not see job security as much as a problem due to the anticipated Brexit. This may also have increased the relative weight of the symbolic threat.

6.2 Concluding remarks and avenues for further research

I would argue in favor of the relevance of this research, because, although often theorized, there have been relatively few empirical assessments of the relationship between different types of threat on the one hand, and attitudinal outcomes on the other hand. Especially recently, scholars have made the distinction between the two types of threat studied here, but often they then proceeded to only examine one type, rather than the interplay between the two types related to the same source of “threat”. There has been little to no systematic empirical evidence regarding the different attitudinal outcomes of realistic and symbolic threat pertaining to the same issue, let alone the immigration debate. The exception, Obaidi et al. (2018), has partly sparked my interest in this topic, and their correlational study invited for experimental examination.

Additionally, this study attempted to make an appealing and intuitive connection between psychological processes on the one hand, and the way public opinion, and less directly macro-level decision making, is shaped on the other hand. I argue it contributes to the peace and conflict and political science literature in the sense that it allows us to study how and in which circumstances individuals can become more violent and how states are therefore able to use framing of a threat to reach certain outcomes. Potentially, the results of this thesis can spark more attention for the role of threat in politics, and can encourage future research on threat aiming to, indeed, distinguish between realistic and symbolic threats, possibly also on a more macro-level.

This thesis provides us with a perceived intergroup threat perspective of the (EU’s) immigration debate. It can increase our understanding of how certain political actors - ranging from mainstream states to far-right fringe parties - frame the immigration debate, leading to various different outcomes. For example, the Dutch Christian Democrat Sybrand Buma said that “the Dutch people have the feeling they are losing their country […] due to newcomers to the labor market” but also that many are “losing their identity”, which really shows the interplay of realistic and symbolic threats (nu.nl 2017). Similarly, the Swedish far-right party Sverigedemokraterna argue on their website that “the net effect of mass immigration is strongly negative, economically as well as socially” (SD 2018). This shows that the study of threat can teach the public to be aware of these sometimes rhetorically sophisticated frames, designed to, indeed, amplify outgroup
hostilities. But the analysis here is not limited to the immigration debate: one can for instance think of different kinds of framing in debates around development aid (realistic: we need to help because it increases our security/welfare; symbolic: we have a moral obligation to help), terrorism (realistic: terrorists are a threat to our security; symbolic: terrorists are a threat to our free and open democracy) or climate change (realistic: we will be in grave danger if we don’t act; symbolic: we can’t let our children deal with our problems). I would therefore argue that the ways realistic and symbolic threats are constructed have important implications for agenda-setting and issue framing.

In general, I would argue that all the indicators that were looked into in this study deserve further scrutiny and examination. Each indicator is associated with different types of behavioral outcomes. The realistic ones can lead to behaviors that intend to deal with the threat (e.g. negotiation, withdrawal or aggression), whereas the symbolic ones can cause more vicious behavioral responses “such as genocide, torture, and mutilation” (Stephan et al. 2009, 22). In my view, it would be highly interesting to do more research on the behavioral outcomes of realistic and symbolic responses to threat. An interesting option in this regard would be the conduction of an implicit association tests using realistically and symbolically framed issues or threats.

Similarly, not all types of threat have been analyzed in this thesis. So, aside from differentiating between group- and individual-level threats, I suggest that, for symbolic threat, future research looks into the role of processes such as dehumanization, delegitimization, ingroup norm and value conformity, and a preference for assimilation of outgroups. For realistic threat, there are avenues for further enquiry regarding withdrawal, avoidance, aggression, and a preference of separatism (or segregation) (Ibid).

On a more subtle level, as it is unclear what specific component of the text (or the photo, for that matter) exactly triggered the respondent to see their respective threat as either realistic or symbolic, it might be interesting to do a similar experiment looking into this. It may very well be that the use of pictures is very underrated, or that the combination of a strong title and a picture can trigger certain responses. A more extended use of communication or media literature can perhaps enrich our understanding of this discursive process.

Another potentially promising way to further examine this relationship between realistic and symbolic threats on the one hand and outgroup hostilities on the other hand, is to incorporate a different case. Other cases can also incorporate the other dimension of realistic threat, being the security part. One can think of climate change: is it a threat that “endangers our security” (realistic) or one that “we can’t pass on to our children” (more symbolic). Or, for example, terrorism: do terrorists threaten “our security in public transport etc.” (realistic), or “our way of life and democratic society/freedom of speech” (symbolic). One more example may be development aid: should we do it because “it increases our security/welfare/trading options” (realistic), or because “we have a moral obligation to help” (symbolic)?
There are some additional things to keep in mind when thinking about future research. Although it is quite obvious that a threat - be it realistic or symbolic - leads to more hostility, it would still be interesting to incorporate a control group in future experimental studies, both for reasons listed above as well as to make more generalized statements toward a broader population. Also, this research’s results are far from conclusive about whether threat can lead to more violent attitudes, and as the corresponding empirical record is quite small, this could be an avenue for further scrutiny as well. Related to this is the question whether these violent attitudes are then mediated through outgroup hostilities, or caused directly by exposure to the threat.

In terms of methodology, this research has proven the value of using MTurk as a means of collection of participants. Data collection was fast, not too expensive, relatively reliable and the sample contained considerable variation in terms of level of education, age, and country of origin. To my knowledge, this was one of the few studies using MTurk as a recruitment tool in an EU-wide context, as most studies using the platform are focused on the US and India. With this research I also hope to contribute that future researchers, can feel a bit more confident to use other means to collect data than the usual student samples.
Bibliography


Shamir, Michal and Tammy Sagiv-Schiffter. 2006. “Conflict, Identity, and Tolerance: Israel in


*Sverigedemokraterna*. 2018. “Invandringspolitik.” SD’s party program (Swedish). Available at: https://sd.se/var-politik/invandringspolitik/


Appendices

Appendix A: Informed consent form

Welcome to this research questionnaire!

This study's aim is to help us understand attitudes towards immigration in the European Union. You will be asked to answer some questions about this topic. Please note that your responses will be kept completely confidentially and anonymously.

The study should take around 5-10 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is totally voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any moment. By proceeding below, you acknowledge the voluntary nature of this study, you confirm that you are at least 18 years of age, and you agree that you can end your participation in this study at any time and for any reason.

I consent

I do not consent, exit this survey
Appendix B: Questions on demographics

Location
Question: In which country do you currently reside?
Options: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Other

Age
Question: How old are you?
Options: -age-

Gender
Question: What is your gender?
Options: Male, Female, Other

Education
Question: What is the highest level of education you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
Options: Less than high school, High school graduate, Some college but no degree, Associate degree, Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree, Doctoral degree, Professional degree
Appendix C: Treatment (independent variable)

The article framing immigration as a realistic threat

--- please read the article below and click to proceed ---

Migration stream puts pressure on European job markets

The inflow of refugees, who often lack basic skills and qualifications, is increasingly causing pressure on the European job markets. The immigration wave of 2015 has still not been processed.

In Germany only 17% of refugees have managed to find a job, meaning that many immigrants are still available for work. This is a problem for European workers.

This puts even higher pressure on a tight European job market in which especially young Europeans have difficulty finding employment. In Spain, youth unemployment rates have even gone up to 40% (see picture).

Immigrants who do not find a job pose a problem to the already expensive European welfare states: as immigrants are on benefits, they cost European countries a lot of money. This goes at the expense of the European population, as long-term unemployment on the one hand and increasing welfare expenses on the other hand are looming.

An employment agency in Madrid, Spain

(Google Open Source Images)
The article framing immigration as a **symbolic threat**

--- please read the article below and click to proceed ---

**Migration stream puts pressure on European identity**

The inflow of refugees, often bringing their own culture, religion and values, is increasingly causing pressure on European identity. The effects of the immigration wave of 2015 are already noticeable.

A number of immigrants stick to their own cultural views that are often incompatible with European cultural values. Some analysts even speak of a “clash of cultures.”

Many immigrants have trouble accepting European values of, for example, equality between men and women; gay rights; and separation between church and state. For example, according to a UN Women survey, more than half of people from the Middle East believe that women should marry their attacker if they are raped.

Immigrants thus pose a threat to European identity, Christian culture and core values such as tolerance and liberty.

*[Two women wearing a burqa](https://example.com)*
Appendix D: Survey instrument (dependent variable)

The questions were put in a different order in order to make more logical sense. Respondents were not able to see the titles of the questions, nor abbreviations (e.g. NEG1).

Pragmatism 1 (NEG1)
Question: “In order to deal with the immigration issue, the EU should make concessions when negotiating with non-EU states, if necessary”

Pragmatism 2 (NEG2)
Question: “It is not acceptable to compromise our values when negotiating with regimes that violate human rights in order to stop the stream of immigrants to Europe”

Violent attitudes 2 (VATT2)
Question: “It is justified for European countries to use or support military force to help stop migration to Europe”

Decreased empathy 1 (DECEM1)
Question: “I feel sorry for people who are forced to migrate to Europe”

Prejudice 1 (PREJ1)
Question: “I would not have a problem with living next to an immigrant family”

Moral exclusion 2 (MOREX2)
Question: “As long as immigrants follow the law, they can hold on to their own values”

Decreased empathy 2 (DECEM2)
Question: “I don’t understand why people are having difficulties integrating in Europe”

Ingroup favoritism 1 (INFAV1)
Question: “Immigrants should first prove their value to our society before they can receive government benefits”

Moral exclusion 1 (MOREX1)
Question: “European culture should be an example for other cultures”
Prejudice 2 (PREJ2)
Question: “Immigrants are more prone to commit crimes than native Europeans”

Ingroup favoritism 2 (INFAV2)
Question: “We should first take care of our own people’s needs before those of immigrants”

Violent attitudes 1: (VATT1)
Question: “It is acceptable to use violence for a just cause”
Appendix E: Test of design and Worker ID

Respondents were provided with a “slider” from 0 (not at all) to 10 (a lot)

“After reading the news article in the beginning of this survey, I mostly thought about:”

“Immigration”
Options: 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

“Job security”
Options: 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

“European culture”
Options: 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

“The economy”
Options: 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

“Norms and values”
Options: 0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10

After that, respondents were asked for their WorkerID to verify their participation.

“In order for us to validate your response and secure fair payment, we would like to ask you for your MTurk Worker ID. Please enter your Worker ID here: ---ID---“
Appendix F: Dehoaxing and desensitization

The participants were informed that the “articles” were fabricated and they were provided with some links containing a more nuanced view of immigration to the EU. Also, they were asked for a code (made up by me) to submit in MTurk, for validation.

Thank you for your participation! Your response has been recorded. Your response will help us to gain more insight in the European integration debate.

In order to verify your response, please enter the following completion code in MTurk: 511816

Please note, the “news article” that you have read in the beginning of the survey was compiled by the researcher using fragments from other (news) sources; and some participants were shown a different version. This was done to look at the immigration issue from multiple perspectives. The facts and figures presented in the article were one-sided, but they were not made-up.

However, for a more nuanced view on the immigration debate, you are welcome to visit the following links:


https://heindehaas.blogspot.se/2017/03/myths-of-migration-much-of-what-we.html

Again, thank you for your participation and understanding!