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Localised Differences in the Conception of Cultural and Economic Security: Examining the Multiculturalism Hypothesis in Singapore

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Abstract

This study examines the multiculturalism hypothesis (Berry, Kalin, & Taylor, 1977) in Singapore, a multi-racial nation steeped in Asian-Confucian culture, in an attempt to distil the underlying constructs of cultural and economic security. Using a nationally representative sample of 924 native-born Singapore citizens, we examined whether national pride, family ties and economic optimism mitigated the effect of realistic and symbolic threat on attitude toward number of immigrants. The results showed that, paradoxically, stronger family ties predicted less acceptance of immigrants but buffered against perceived realistic threat. More economic optimism predicted more acceptance of immigrants but also made one more sensitive to symbolic threats. National pride had no effect on one's receptivity towards immigrants, nor did it interact with threat. Possible reasons for these findings were discussed with reference to Singapore's unique culture, history and view towards immigration. Future study on the multiculturalism hypothesis should consider the particular cultural context of the site of study, instead of assuming a one-size-fit-all approach.

Localised Differences in the Conception of Cultural and Economic Security: Examining the Multiculturalism Hypothesis in Singapore

In an increasingly globalized world where plural societies are the norm rather than the exception, all countries will eventually grapple with the reality of ethno-cultural pluralism. In communities with a “multiculturalism” orientation (Berry, 1997), diverse cultures co-exist harmoniously, and all groups participate equally in society at large with mutual acceptance and understanding. This acculturative philosophy stands in contrast with the “melting pot” model, where non-dominant groups assimilate themselves into a singular, mainstream culture practiced in the host society.

Multiculturalism in general is seen to be the ideal approach as it celebrates diversity, allowing minority groups to flourish. Maintenance of cultural heritage coupled with engagement with the majority – also known as an “integration” acculturative strategy (Berry, 1997) – is associated with positive outcomes for minority group members such as lower acculturative distress (Scottham & Dias, 2010), higher self-esteem (Berry & Sabatier, 2010; Nigbur et al., 2008; Wang, Schwartz, & Zamboanga, 2010) and improved life satisfaction (Pfafferott & Brown, 2006).

However, the benefits of multiculturalism are less clear for majority group members. The host majority inherently enjoys certain privileges and higher status thanks to their numerical dominance and (in most cases) historical legacy. The presence of multiple minority groups, with each maintaining their separate cultures, may be seen as infringing on these advantages and threatens the majority’s group identity and status position (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006). Studies on acculturative attitudes have shown that even though the majority group members may be in favour of integration, they are also equally or more pleased when minorities adopt an “assimilation” approach – participation in the host society without necessarily maintaining their own ethnic heritage (Berry, 1997; van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998). Thus, for the dominant group, the minority group’s engagement with the host culture is more of a concern than the latter’s cultural maintenance.

The Multiculturalism Hypothesis

Under what conditions would majority group members be supportive of multiculturalism in their society? Berry, Kalin and Taylor (1977) posit that feeling secure in one’s economic livelihood and socio-cultural identity will lead to one being more accepting of other groups and thus engender a more positive intergroup relation. Conversely, threats to or the lack of economic and cultural security will result in negative attitudes and intergroup hostility. This is termed the *multiculturalism hypothesis*. Socio-economic security thus serves to protect one against the perceived threats from cultural diversity, resulting in more room for tolerance, acceptance and positive attitudes toward multiculturalism.

As operationalised by Berry and colleagues (1977; Berry & Kalin, 1995), the sense of confidence necessary for accepting “others” is derived through security in both cultural and economic spheres. Cultural security refers to one’s confidence that his or her cultural identity as a national of the country, or as a member of his or her ethnic group, will not be undermined as a result of increased diversity from immigration. Economic security measures one’s confidence that the country’s economic climate is stable and the extent that one feels that he or she is financially secure in it. If one can feel both culturally and economically secure in the face of rising immigration, the multiculturalism hypothesis predicts that he or she will exhibit more accepting and tolerant attitudes. Put another way, security buffers one against perceived threats from immigration and diversity.

The multiculturalism hypothesis has seen some empirical support. In national surveys in Canada, measures of cultural and economic security were found to be positively associated with intercultural attitudes, including multicultural ideology (Berry et al., 1977; Berry & Kalin, 1995). A similar relationship was found in Russia (Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2013), with greater sense of national identity and cultural and economic security predicting more acceptance of other cultural groups, and in Australia (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010) and New Zealand (Ward & Masgoret, 2008), where security had a positive correlation with endorsement of multicultural ideology. In these studies, the multiculturalism hypothesis was supported for both majority and minority group members.

Additionally, the MIRIPS (Mutual Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies) studies on host and immigrant adolescents’ identity and intercultural relations have shown robust influence of cultural and economic confidence in mitigating negative attitudes toward out-groups (e.g., Galyapina & Lebedeva, 2016). Host adolescents demonstrate greater acceptance and inclusion towards immigrants when they experience a greater sense of security over their socio-economic status.

One limitation of the current literature on the multiculturalism hypothesis is that much of it defines cultural and economic security very broadly. To enable a deeper understanding and application of the multiculturalism hypothesis, more research is needed to examine the constructs of cultural and economic security. Furthermore, these variables will differ across contexts due to cultural differences. The present study seeks to close this research gap by investigating the multiculturalism hypothesis among native-born citizens in Singapore – a society rooted in Asian-Confucian values. We use attitudinal measures that are theoretically related to cultural and economic security, as elaborated in the next section.

Cultural and Economic Security

National Pride

National pride refers to the positive affect citizens feel toward their country as a result of national identity (Smith & Jarkko, 1998). Although modern nations tend to be culturally heterogeneous, a national culture often exists which shapes public discourse and behaviour. Pride in one’s country then suggests a measure of satisfaction and security in one’s membership in the national culture, especially among the majority group. Lebedeva and Tatarko (2013) found that among ethnic Russians in Moscow both positive national

identification and feelings of cultural and economic security promote multiculturalism. Thus, national pride can contribute to higher confidence in one's cultural identity and buffer against the threat from immigration and diversity.

On the other hand, national pride can also have an adverse effect on multicultural attitudes. Self-categorisation theory (Turner & Reynolds, 2001) posits that group identification makes one more sensitive to potential threats to the in-group. Verkuyten (2009) found evidence among native Dutch samples that stronger national identification predicts less support for immigrants and other minorities, and this relationship is mediated by greater perception of threat.

One possible reason for the mixed findings is the way in which the national identity is construed. While Verkuyten's (2009) surveys of Dutch natives in the Netherlands defined national identity as "Dutch," Lebedeva and Tatarko (2013) tested a paradigm where the Russian national identity includes larger society members. Subsequently, the former predicted negative multicultural attitudes while the latter predicted more positive ones.

Family Ties

As the earliest form of social relationship, the strength of family ties can be a source of security from the stresses of life. As primary caregivers, family members are usually the first attachment figures with whom people form close relationships. Children can form a secure or insecure attachment style with their primary caregiver depending on the style of engagement (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969). A secure attachment is characterized by a willingness to explore one's surrounding environment, knowing they have a secure base (i.e., their caregiver) to return to in times of need. Secure attachment is also associated with better mental health and emotional regulation (Bowlby, 1973). The better psychological adjustment and feelings of safety as a result of secure relationships with one's family members may thus allow one the psychological bandwidth for cultural acceptance. This notion has received empirical support, with secure attachment style being found to be positively related to attitudes toward integration (Hofstra, van Oudenhoven, & Buunk, 2005).

Culturally, the family is an important part of societies in what has been termed the Sinic sphere, which encompasses China, Korea, Vietnam, and other Chinese communities in South-east Asia (Huntington, 1996). They are bound by a common belief in Confucian philosophy, which teaches that the self exists in the context of the family and that the family is central to one's self-concept. This makes family ties of much greater importance to Asian-collectivist cultures than in Western-individualist cultures. While individualist cultures place greater emphasis on independence and self-achievement, collectivists place more importance on cooperation and social relationships, especially that of the family (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995). In the Asian context, strong family ties thus suggest stronger cultural affinity.

In the context of Singapore especially, the importance of the family is further affirmed by policies promoting the maintenance of the family unit. Family ties are encouraged through social policies such as priority for public housing among married couples and multi-generational families (Housing & Development Board, n.d.), as well as a financial grant to

help extended families live closer together (“Grant to help extended families live close together”, 2015). Singaporeans themselves recognise the importance of family, with 90% agreeing that they have a close-knit family (Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2009; “Singaporeans value families: Survey”, 2015). As such, maintaining strong family ties in Singapore is likely to be linked to a more secure sense of self.

Economic Optimism

Economic optimism refers to the belief that, on a macro scale, there is room for the country to prosper and be fiscally healthy. By extension, when the country is in a strong economic state, its citizens can have faith that they will have opportunities to prosper as well. This belief directly contributes to a sense of security around one’s socio-economic status and prospects. Economic security features prominently in Berry and colleagues’ (1977) original study on the multiculturalism hypothesis and subsequent research based on it (e.g., Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2013; Ward & Masgoret, 2008). It was consistently found that economic security is positively correlated with support for multiculturalism.

Further evidence that economic concerns influence attitudes toward diversity come from Esses and colleagues’ Instrumental Model of Group Conflict (Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998; Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2005). In their research, inducing native Canadians to believe that immigrants are finding economic success in their country led to more negative attitudes toward them, and this relationship was mediated by higher perceptions of zero-sum competition. Minority and immigrant groups can thus be seen as a source of economic stress, which would then lead to majority group members being less receptive towards the former. Greater economic optimism implies a sense that the economic pie is larger, which would then mitigate the perceived threat and competition from successful migrants.

The Present Study

In this study, we use attitude toward the number of immigrants in the country as a proxy for multicultural attitudes instead of measuring it directly. Singapore is historically a multicultural state that has actively enforced policies and norms of multiculturalism on its populace (Noor & Leong, 2013; Roets, Au, & van Hiel, 2015). As “racial harmony” between the major ethnic groups (Chinese, Malay, and Indians) is so integral to the Singaporean national identity, a multicultural ideology is widely endorsed. Furthermore, the internalisation and strong social norms of multicultural attitudes make it difficult to tease out strong deviations and would confound the measurement of true multicultural attitudes (Breugelmans & van der Vijver, 2004).

In contrast, perceptions toward immigrants tend to be more diverse, especially given the context in Singapore. Despite being an immigrant society throughout her short history, a sharp influx of migration in the 1990s and 2000s led to a public backlash against the government for having a loose immigration policy. Yet, Singaporeans largely accept the logic that the country needs immigrants to bolster the ageing population and keep the economy growing (Chang & Ong, 2012). In such a context, it would thus be more informative to

measure native-born Singaporeans' opinion of the overall number of immigrants as a reflection of how welcoming they are toward foreigners.

In line with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Integrated Threat Theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), higher perceptions of threat make one less welcoming towards immigrants. Perceived threats may take two forms: realistic threat, which refers to encroachment on tangible resources such as educational and employment opportunities; and symbolic threat, which refers to threats to one's worldview and cultural identity. Realistic threat tends to be perceived when one thinks that they have reduced access to resources they feel entitled to as a result of the presence of immigrants. Symbolic threat can be perceived when one feels that their concept of the national in-group is undergoing change due to the influence of immigrants.

In line with the Integrated Threat Theory, we predict that both realistic and symbolic threat will independently have negative effects on the acceptance of new immigrants. As per the multiculturalism hypothesis, we predict that national pride, family ties and economic optimism will buffer the effects of threat. In particular, we predict that national pride and family ties, being indicators of cultural identity, would mitigate the effect of symbolic threat. Economic optimism is directly related to concerns over resources and should thus mitigate the effect of realistic threat.

Table 1
Demographic Statistics

	N	%
Total	924	100
Gender		
Male	454	49.1
Female	470	50.9
Age		
21 to 29 years	183	19.8
30 to 39 years	162	17.5
40 to 49 years	215	23.3
50 to 54 years	110	11.9
55 years and above	254	27.5
Race		
Chinese	702	76.0
Malay	144	15.6
Indian	70	7.6
Others ¹	8	0.9

Notes: ¹Other races include: Bugis, Caucasian, Eurasian, Pakistani, and Sikh.

Method

The data was collected through door-to-door interviews throughout Singapore using a stratified quota sampling method that controlled for age, gender and ethnicity known in the population distribution. This data was collected as part of a larger study assessing the state of integration in Singapore.

The sample consisted of 924 native-born Singapore citizens, all at least 21 years old. The demographic breakdown of the sample is summarised in Table 1. The sample is representative of Singapore's population demographics.

Measures

Preferred number of immigrants

The dependent variable consisted of a single item assessing how respondents felt about the number of immigrants in Singapore. Respondents were asked, "What is your opinion on the overall number of permanent residents and new citizens in Singapore?" Participants answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (should have less) to 5 (should have more). The higher the score, the more tolerant and welcoming the respondent was toward immigration.

Perceived threats from immigrants

Measures of realistic and symbolic threats were adapted from the study by Leong (2008), which was modified for research in other regions including Singapore and Japan (e.g., Leong & Soon, 2011; Komisarof, Leong, & Teng, under revision). Respondents' views of economic threats from immigrants were obtained by aggregating the perceived threat on key resource areas of employment, public housing, healthcare, education and public safety; for example: "Job opportunities will be reduced for local-born Singaporeans if we have more immigrants." The Cronbach's alpha for this 5-item scale was 0.87.

Symbolic threat was measured using a single-item instrument, "Having more immigrants in Singapore will weaken social cohesion in this country." For both realistic and symbolic threat, each statement was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The higher the scores, the greater the respondent's perceived threat.

National Pride

National pride was measured using a 5-item inventory adapted from the international index developed by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), University of Chicago (Smith & Jarkko, 1998). Items tapped on the pride respondents felt from being a Singapore citizen; for example: "Generally speaking, Singapore is a better country than most other countries." Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicated greater national pride. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.56. Although this score was relatively low, further analyses based on inter-item

correlations were considered sufficiently strong for a 5-item inventory (Briggs & Cheek, 1986). Furthermore, this scale has been repeatedly used in both national and cross-national surveys of national values (e.g., Chung & Choe, 2008; Smith & Kim, 2006) and thus allows for international standardisation and comparison.

Family Ties

Family ties was measured using a 3-item inventory adapted from Gaines and colleagues (1997). The scale consisted of three items: "My family is always there for me in times of need," "I know that my family has my best interests in mind" and "In my opinion, the family is the most important social institution of all." Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicated stronger family ties. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.88.

Economic Optimism

Economic optimism was adapted from Leong (2013) to measure the level of socio-economic security. This 3-item inventory measures respondents' perceived economic prospects for Singapore for the next decade. The items were, "Singapore will continue to be economically prosperous in the next 10 years," "There will be sufficient jobs and opportunities for every Singaporean in the next 10 years" and "Singapore will continue to attract good foreign investment into the country in the next 10 years." Respondents rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicated greater economic security. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.81.

Results

The data was analysed in a three-step hierarchical regression model. In the first step, demographic variables (gender, age and race) were entered. In the second step, the two threat and three security variables were entered. These five variables were standardised before adding them to the model. In the third step, the interaction terms of each security variable with each threat variable were entered. The results are shown in Table 2.

None of the demographic variables had a significant effect on the dependent variable, although the R^2 (0.12) for the first step was significant, $F(4, 919) = 2.80, p = 0.025$. There were significant main effects for symbolic threat ($B = -0.21, t = -5.07, p < 0.001$), realistic threat ($B = -0.38, t = -8.95, p < 0.001$), family ties ($B = -0.08, t = -2.29, p = 0.02$) and economic optimism ($B = 0.09, t = 2.51, p = 0.01$). The more realistic and symbolic threat that native-born Singaporeans perceived from immigrants, and the stronger their family ties, the less tolerant they were of immigrants. Greater optimism toward Singapore's economic future predicted more tolerance toward immigrants. The main effects explained the change in R^2 of 0.23, $F(9, 914) = 31.83, p < 0.001$.

Adding the interaction terms revealed significant interaction effects for symbolic threat x economic optimism ($B = -0.14, t = -3.23, p = 0.01$) and realistic threat x family ties ($B = 0.09, t = 2.18, p = 0.03$). We adopt the method recommended by Cohen, Cohen, West and

Aiken (2003) for the interpretation of interaction terms. Simple slope analyses showed that, while participants who felt threatened generally preferred fewer immigrants around, *higher* economic optimism made one much more sensitive to symbolic threat (steeper slope; see Fig. 1). In other words, contrary to the hypothesis, respondents who felt more optimistic about the future economic prospects were more, not less, affected by the impact of symbolic threats from immigration. On the other hand, stronger family ties made one more resilient toward realistic threats (gentler slope; see Fig. 2). Strong family bonding moderated the impact of economic threats arising from immigration. The combined R^2 change of 0.02 for this step was significant, $F(15, 908) = 21.30, p < 0.001$.

Table 2
Hierarchical Regression Model on Preferred Number of Immigrants

Variables	Mean (SD)	Range (Min. – Max.)	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Step 1					
Gender (Female)	-	-	-0.01	-0.14	0.89
Age	-	-	0.02	1.11	0.27
Chinese	-	-	0.12	1.00	0.32
Malay	-	-	-0.03	-0.21	0.84
Step 2					
Symbolic Threat (ST)	3.14 (1.01)	1 – 5	-0.21**	-5.07	<0.001
Realistic Threat (RT)	3.58 (0.75)	1 – 5	-0.38**	-8.95	<0.001
National Pride (NP)	17.3 (2.61)	6 – 24	-0.05	-1.38	0.17
Family Ties (FT)	12.8 (1.47)	3 – 15	-0.08*	-2.29	0.02
Economic Optimism (EO)	10.6 (1.93)	3 – 15	0.09*	2.51	0.01
Step 3					
ST x NP			0.06	1.38	0.17
ST x FT			-0.01	-0.28	0.78
ST x EO			-0.14*	-3.23	0.01
RT x NP			0.04	0.87	0.38
RT x FT			0.09*	2.18	0.03
RT x EO			0.06	1.33	0.19

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$. Notes: $R^2 = 0.12$ for Step 1 ($p = 0.025$); $\Delta R^2 = 0.23$ for Step 2 ($p < 0.001$); $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$ for Step 3 ($p < 0.001$). All values for *B*, *t*, and *p* are those at Step 3.

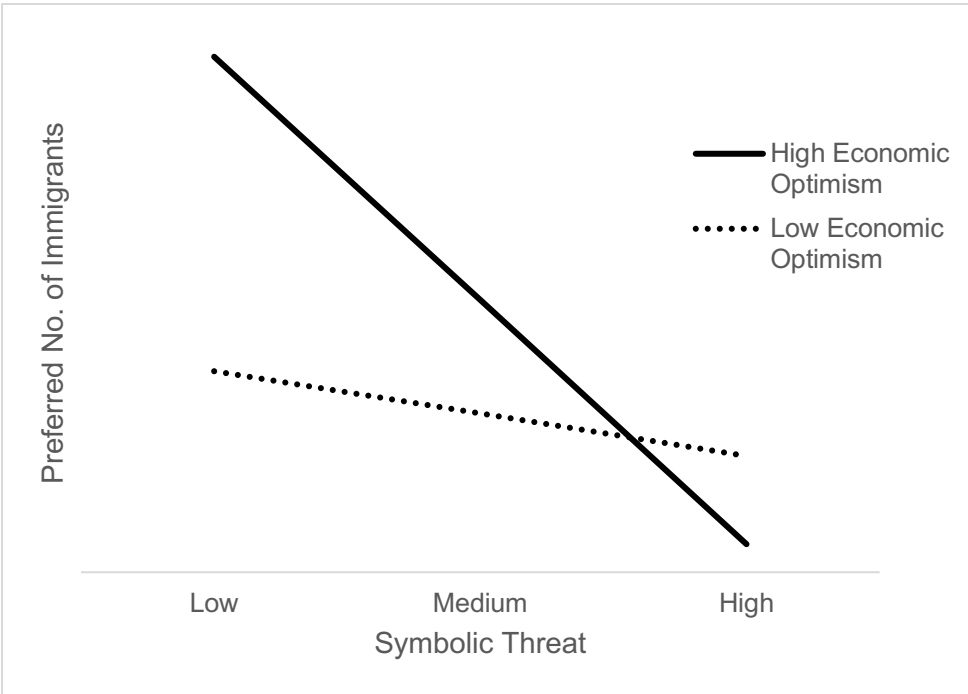


Figure 1. Interaction between perceived symbolic threat and economic optimism.

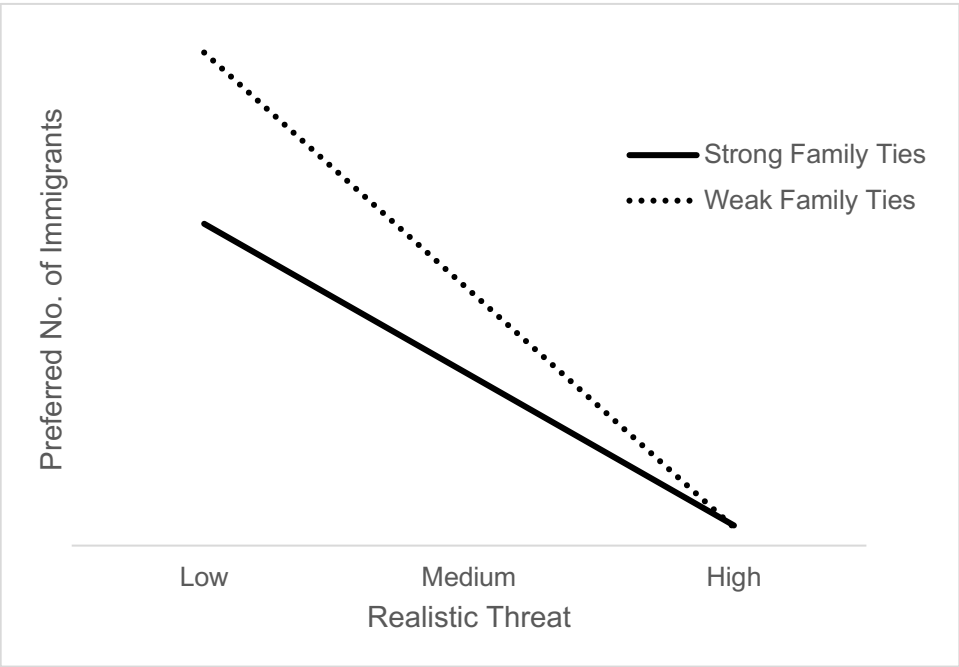


Figure 2. Interaction between perceived realistic threat and family ties.

Discussion

The present study tests the multiculturalism hypothesis in Singapore. We expected national pride and family ties to mitigate the negative main effect of symbolic threat and economic optimism to mitigate the negative main effect of realistic threat. Our results showed seemingly paradoxical trends – although family ties predicted less tolerance for immigrants, it also weakened the effect of realistic threat. While economic optimism predicted more tolerance for immigrants, it also made one more sensitive to symbolic threats. We discuss each finding in turn.

Economic Optimism and Symbolic Threat

Although economic optimism independently predicted more support for immigration, it did not mitigate realistic threat as expected. The lack of a threat-buffering effect indicates that the hypothesis of economic optimism giving one the freedom and security to be more accepting of cultural diversity is not supported in this context. When economic optimism is low, Singaporeans are generally less welcoming of immigrants regardless of the perceived threat to social cohesion. When economic optimism is high, Singaporeans are much more reactive to symbolic threats, with tolerance of immigrants much higher when threat is low and much lower when threat is high.

It thus appears that economic optimism improves tolerance for immigration on an instrumental basis, with Singaporeans accepting the narrative that immigrants are good for the economy, so long as they do not upset the social fabric. Research by Guerra, Gaertner, António, and Deegan (2015) reflects this distinction between the indispensability of immigrants to national identity and the economic functioning of the country. Guerra et al. (2015) suggested that immigrant groups can be regarded as important for the contributions to the economy, without necessarily being perceived as necessary for the conception of national identity. In the past, the Singapore government relied primarily on economic and instrumental arguments to justify its open immigration policy (Lim & Leong, 2017). Such a narrative could have entrenched a general public perception that immigrants are only necessary for their economic contribution and never a true part of the national in-group.

Peculiar to Singaporeans is their sense of identity and self-worth being closely tied to their employment status and economic success (Velayutham, 2007). Since Singapore's independence, the government has consistently reiterated to its citizens that human capital is the island city-state's only marketable resource. The individual's economic contribution is thus crucial to the growth and survival of the nation. In addition, Zárate, Garza and Hitlan (2004) found that perceived similarity in work-related traits induced greater prejudice toward immigrants. In the last two decades, most immigrants that have settled in Singapore are highly-skilled and therefore directly compete with native-born Singaporeans for jobs and resources. Due to this competition, native-born Singaporeans might feel that immigrants infringe on their cultural identity. This may potentially explain the higher sensitivity to symbolic threat exhibited by participants who were higher in economic optimism.

Family Ties and Realistic Threat

Family ties was expected to reinforce cultural identity and security. Our results showed that while family ties indeed had a threat-buffering effect, it acted against realistic rather than symbolic threat as anticipated. Furthermore, family ties on its own predicted less tolerance for immigrants.

This paradoxical effect of close family ties has also been discussed by Fukuyama (1995), who theorized that prosperity in nations is related to the radius of trust in the society. While high trust societies are more willing to cooperate with others on a wider scale, low trust societies prefer to keep business interests within the family. Ermisch and Gambetta (2010) produced empirical evidence for a causal relationship between strong family ties and low trust for strangers, mediated by exposure to and experience with non-family members. As it happens, many Asian-Confucian countries, such as China, Korea, India, and Thailand (Ahmed & Salas, 2008; Fukuyama, 1995; Ward, Mamerow, & Meyer, 2014), are classified as having low trust alongside strong family ties. According to a 2015 survey on national values, Singaporeans consider family to be the top personal value among other virtues, but perceive society to be competitive, self-centred and blame shifting – reflecting a lack of trust in the larger society despite strong family values (Sim, 2015). As such, the importance of the family to Singaporeans seems to cast more suspicion toward foreigners by narrowing the circle of trust, resulting in a less welcoming attitude. Due to the new and somewhat counter-intuitive nature of this finding, more research is warranted.

On the other hand, when analysing family ties as a moderator, we found a significant two-way interaction effect (refer to Fig. 2) – the positive interaction between family ties and realistic threat affirms that strong family bonds can make one more resilient (Lee, Brown, Mitchell, & Schiraldi, 2008). Psychological resilience is largely dependent on protective factors that enhance adaptation such as life satisfaction, self-esteem and social support (Lee et al., 2013). Increased immigration and cultural diversity tends to cause the majority native population to be concerned over the availability of resources which they believe are entitled to them. This includes employment, education and housing (Esses et al., 1998). While resilience was not measured directly in this study, it is likely that it mediates the threat-buffering effect of family ties. Further research may be able to shed more light onto this phenomenon.

National Pride

Curiously, national pride did not mitigate the effect of realistic nor symbolic threat, and neither did it affect one's tolerance toward immigrants. This finding could be a testament to the mixed findings in the empirical literature on national pride. While national identification has been shown to be correlated with multicultural attitudes (Lebedeva & Tatarko, 2013), in some contexts it also predicts more negative outgroup perceptions (e.g., Louis, Esses, & Lalonde, 2013). More remarkably, Esses and colleagues (2006) found that even among Canadians, who are famed for their multiculturalism, making salient one's national identity led to more negative attitudes toward immigrants. It was only by emphasising a common national in-group inclusive of immigrants that attitudes improved. In the same study, inducing

a common national in-group among Germans backfired, worsening attitudes toward immigrants.

In Singapore, although multicultural ideology is well-internalised (Roets et al., 2015), there remains a stark divide between native-born citizens and naturalised immigrants, despite much of the latter being of the same ethnicities as the locals. The natives remain suspicious of the motives of immigrants, who fear that the latter are just taking advantage of the country as a springboard to greener pastures (Chong, 2015), or that they are unable to integrate (Ortiga, 2014). The relationship between Singaporeans' national pride and attitudes toward immigrants is thus complicated and warrants more direct study.

Conclusion

Taken together, this research finds that the multiculturalism hypothesis is only partially supported in the context of Singapore. More importantly, it highlights culture-specific nuances in the way host nationals respond to immigrants and diversity. It also shows that there are differences in how cultural and economic security are engendered. The threat-buffering effects of securing traits are not that intuitive, as seen by how economic optimism exacerbates symbolic threat but family ties mitigates realistic threat.

The principle behind the multiculturalism hypothesis is still an important one, as nations aim to reckon with increased cultural diversity. In expanding the literature on the multiculturalism hypothesis across different contexts, it is important to take note of the local nuances that would change the nature of both threat and security in that setting.

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