

**Selecting Talented Migrants: Majority and Minority Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

Many countries seek to specifically attract talented migrants in order to match the needs of national economies. In addition to the well-known intergroup antagonism between natives and immigrants, such immigration policies targeting talented migrants imply differentiation *within* the immigrant group, using normative criteria to distinguish desirable and economically useful immigrants from undesirable ones. Based on *European Social Survey* data (Round 7, N = 9856) comprised of national citizens from six multinational countries, we show that national majorities support individualized, “cherry picking” immigration policies to a greater degree than historical national minorities, and that this support is associated with national majorities’ stronger sense of identification with the country and its individualistic norms. We thereby conceptualize a novel facet of multiculturalism based on individual justice principles that is rarely at the forefront of research on immigration and multiculturalism.

Keywords: Talent-based immigration policy, Skilled migrants, Multiculturalism, National minorities, National majorities, National identification

### **Selecting Talented Migrants: Majority and Minority Perspectives**

*“The European Union should reform its legal labour migration policies to get its fair share of the global talent pool” (OECD Report, “Europe is underachieving,” 2016, June 7)*

*“America is participating in a competition for talent. If we change immigration policies and make it harder for smart people to come and stay, we're going to start losing this battle.” (Seibel, 2017, as cited in Taylor, 2017, June 27)*

*“It is important that UK immigration policy post-Brexit should be based on a set of clearly defined criteria which reflect a coherent view of what type of immigration is desirable. Although not the only criterion, contributing to the skills-base and talent pool needed for the UK economy to flourish is a central consideration” (“More talent, please,” 2017, March 3)*

The selection of new residents allowed to permanently enter a country is a central aim of national immigration policies. Over recent decades in Western countries, these policies have generally become less restrictive, yet more selective (de Haas, Natter, & Vezzoli, 2016; Helbling & Kalkum, 2017). As demonstrated in the quotes above, attracting talented migrants is considered imperative today to satisfy the needs of national economies (Cerna & Czaika, 2016; Shachar, 2016). The most significant question behind immigration policy is thus no longer “how many immigrants should be allowed to enter?”, but rather “what type of immigrant is desirable?” and, more generally, “who has the right to enter?” (see Green, 2009; Testé, Maisonneuve, Assilaméhou, & Perrin, 2012).

When it comes to immigration research in social and political psychology, most existing research has been concerned with immigration attitudes in general, or perceived threat of immigration and prejudice towards immigrants (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Sarrasin, Green, Bolzman, Visintin, & Politi, 2018). We argue instead that a nuanced analysis of attitudes towards a selective, talent-based immigration policy is necessary, as such a policy involves processes that cannot be reduced to general immigration or intergroup attitudes. Indeed, the targeted search for global talent not only implies the typical intergroup antagonism between nationals and immigrants, but also implies

differentiation between individual immigrants, thereby articulating processes within and between groups (Dovidio, 2013).

Differentiating between individual immigrants requires the implementation of normative criteria whereby migrants are selected according to their proximity with a prototype defined by national values (see Reijerse, Van Acker, Vanbeselaere, Phalet, & Duriez, 2013). While the criteria associated with this prototype may include categorical distinctions like skin color, language and religious affiliation, in Western societies decisions regarding migrants are largely determined by distinctions of individual deservingness such as education level and job qualifications (see Green, 2007). These distinctions are likely to be associated with the (economically) liberal values of individual autonomy and personal responsibility that are prevalent in many free-market oriented countries around the world (see Heritage Foundation, 2020). We therefore suggest that endorsing such individualist norms--through identification with these societies (see Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002)--should account for support for selective immigration policies.

The objective of the present study was thus to examine *who believes* that criteria involving talent and specific skill sets should be given priority when determining who can enter and live in a country. More specifically, we test the hypothesis that membership in national majority groups (as opposed to historical national minority groups) predicts support for individualized immigration policy, mediated by identification with the country and controlling for general restrictive immigration attitudes. In the following, we first define in more detail the justice concerns that underlie the selection of talented migrants. Then, we explain why majority group members, in comparison to minority group members, are more sensitive to these individual justice concerns that are dominant in Western societies.

### **Justice and Individualized Immigration Policy**

Talented migrants have acquired specific skill sets that are considered desirable and useful for a given national economy. The selection is based on education level and career qualifications, leading to increased chances for immigration and, subsequently, legal residency (Cerna, 2016; Green, 2007, 2009; Shachar, 2016). In the selection process, prioritizing talent therefore implies a concern for the justice principle of *equity* that has priority over the principles of *equality* and *need* (Deutsch, 1975).

The equity principle is a defining component of individual justice. Based on the principle of proportionality between contributions and outcomes, Equity Theory (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973) proposes that social actors perceive instances of social exchange as fair and equitable if a justifiable correspondence between individual contributions and benefits can be established. When this balance is offset—when contributions are perceived to be too high and benefits too low or vice versa—distress in the form of resentment or guilt is experienced, leading people to attempt to restore equity within the relationship. In this individualistic and instrumental view of social justice, people are perceived as rational and self-sufficient actors, backed up by the (neo-) liberal value of meritocratic achievement [BLINDED].

Equity differs from the other justice principles of equality and need (see Deutsch, 1975) to the extent that the latter are comparatively de-individualizing. Equality prescribes equal outcomes for all members of a given beneficiary category, whereas need involves outcomes that are contingent on (subjective) deprivation. Both equality and need thus establish how rewards are (or should be) distributed between sub-groups or at a “system” level (Modigliani & Gamson, 1979; Rawls, 1971). This is also known as collective justice, which takes form when equality and need are conceptualized in comparison to an average or a “relative minimum” (Brickman, Folger, Goode, & Schul, 1981). For immigration policy to be

based on such principles, either anyone in sufficient need (need principle), or all members of a given (ethno-national) category (equality principle), would be eligible to enter, independently of their individual qualifications and “talents”.

### **Multiculturalism and Individualized Immigration Policy**

In terms of its significance for multicultural societies, talent-based selection of migrants is an ambiguous policy as it simultaneously reflects restriction and acceptance of immigration. In terms of being restrictive, such policies allow entry only for those who have something to offer to the country (see Green, 2007). Some research even suggests that perceived economic gains from immigration is associated with (implicit) prejudice towards immigrant groups (Mähönen, Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, & Finell, 2011). However, in terms of being accepting, talent-based policies can also be understood as a means to *increase* cultural diversity. In Canada, for example, even though cultural diversity is valued, a “points system” drives the selection of newcomers, favoring those who are most educated and qualified (Ferrer, Picot, & Riddell, 2014). In this way, cultural diversity is appreciated to the extent that diverse *groups* are composed of talented *individuals* (see also Gündemir, Homan, Usova, & Galinsky, 2017).

Through an analysis of how the term *multiculturalism* is used in newspapers, May (2016) argues that while some (especially conservative right-wing) newspapers are “otherwise very critical towards multiculturalism, [they have] a very positive appreciation of it when the term is employed in the economic field” (p. 1343). Indeed, endorsement of multiculturalism is usually associated with a left-wing political ideology and is consistent with collective justice principles such as group-based equality and need [BLINDED]. However, research on value-in-diversity beliefs suggests that instrumentality-based support for diversity can nevertheless be associated with benevolent views and behaviour towards newcomers (Kauff, Stegmann, van Dick, Beierlein, & Christ, 2019). Indeed, accepting talented migrants and supporting an

individualized immigration policy is a way to support what May (2016) refers to as “managerial” multiculturalism, based instead on principles of individual justice. These principles should be more readily supported by majorities than minorities, as argued in the following section.

### **Majority Perspectives on Individualized Immigration Policy**

Majority members make up the numerically largest (and usually ethnicity-based) group in a given national society (Green & Staerklé, 2013). In Western societies, the majority group comprises, for example, Whites relative to other ethnic groups in the United States, people of European versus Maori descent in New Zealand, English-speaking people relative to French-speaking people in Canada, or native citizens relative to foreign-born residents in Western Europe. These are typical examples of national majority-minority relations where a numerical majority is generally (albeit not always) associated with greater prestige, social value and political power, compared to numerical minorities who have a greater chance to experience (historical and/or present-day) subordination (see Simon, Aufderheide, & Kampmeier, 2001).

Prior research has shown that compared to minority members, members of majority groups are generally oriented towards individual rather than group-based forms of justice (Azzi, 1998). Asked to establish governmental representation for two groups differing in size, for example, numerical majorities have been shown to express preference for proportional representation (whereby representation is determined by the number of individuals in each group, i.e., individual justice) rather than equal representation (whereby representation is determined by the number of groups regardless of their size, i.e., collective justice; Azzi, 1992). Moreover, in the context of migrant cultural adaptation, research shows that dominant majorities such as Whites or nationals generally prefer newcomers to assimilate to dominant cultural norms, treating everyone as individuals rather than acknowledging and addressing

group-based differences (see Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2007). Because the selection of talented migrants is based on individual justice principles, (dominant) majorities should support such an individualized immigration policy more strongly than minorities.

One reason majorities prefer individual justice principles over collective justice principles may be because the former serve their vested interests, for example by increasing their governmental power in the case of proportional representation, by prioritizing their culture in the case of immigrant assimilation, or by benefiting their group economically in the case of attracting talented migrants (Azzi, 1998). As such, individual justice principles reinforce the unequal status quo between minorities and majorities and secure the privileged position of the majority in society. Another explanation may be rooted in different self-definitions: Research has demonstrated that relative to minority members, majority members tend to define themselves more as “default” individuals than as group members, thereby shaping their views on justice and society (Azzi, 1998; Iacoviello & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2015; Simon et al., 2001). We argue, in turn, that normative and ideological factors are also at play, whereby socialization in Western majority groups reinforces the “norm of self-interest” (Miller, 1999) and the motivation to self-identify as an individual rather than as a group member, based on the ideological dominance of (economically) liberal justice principles. In Western liberal societies, such majority norms tend to be rooted in individualistic values (Sampson, 1988). Research has shown, for example, that when majority members identify strongly with their country (and/or as individuals), they are more likely to adhere to individualistic values (Jetten et al., 2002), including the individual justice principle of personal responsibility (Zdaniuk & Bobocel, 2011). Indeed, supporting an individualized immigration policy is aligned with the idea that talented migrants should work hard and be responsible for their own fate (see also Testé et al., 2012). Stronger identification with the



country should therefore also be associated with increased support for an individualized immigration policy.

The present study was conducted across six European nations characterized with significant historical minority-majority relations. Multinational studies have shown that, in general, national majorities feel stronger ties to the nation in comparison to national minorities [BLINDED]. This difference is explained not only by (historical) asymmetry in power and control of the state (Horowitz, 2000), but also by the idea that members of majority groups tend to perceive their subgroup norms and values as most representative of the superordinate national category (Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007). We therefore hypothesized that national majorities should support an individualized immigration policy more strongly than minorities, explained by their stronger identification with the country (and thus its individualistic norms).

It is important to note, however, that national majorities also express more xenophobic and anti-minority policy attitudes than minorities (Huynh, Devos, & Altman, 2015), and that identification with a country can be associated with anti-immigration attitudes (depending on the context; Billiet, Maddens, & Beerten, 2003; Pehrson & Green, 2010; Wright, 2011; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). We therefore control for these negative, general immigration attitudes when testing our hypotheses.

### **National Minority Perspectives**

National minorities, in turn, should be more critical of selective immigration policies. Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (Brewer, 1991) posits that individuals' simultaneous need for inclusion and differentiation is satisfied through identification with a relative minority group. The smaller the group, the stronger the sense of identification with that group, as the shared identity satisfies the need for inclusion and the smaller size satisfies the need for distinctiveness from larger groups (see also Hornsey & Jetten, 2004). While minorities may

simultaneously identify with the country more generally (known as dual identity, see for example Dovidio et al., 2007), the two identities tend to be more independent than they are for majorities [BLINDED]. Moreover, this stronger sense of collective sub-group identity is coupled with greater sensitivity towards principles of intergroup equality (see Azzi, 1992, 1998) that may be violated by an individualized immigration policy selecting immigrants on the sole basis of equity principles (see Son Hing et al., 2011). This explains why minorities should express lower support for individualized immigration policies, compared to majorities.

We test this hypothesis with historical national minorities (as opposed to immigrant minorities) in order to reduce potential confound and ingroup bias between the respondent minority sample and the target minority group (i.e., immigrants; see Just & Anderson, 2015). In most instances, members of historical national minorities are national citizens who live in a common national-legal context and share the same legal rights (e.g., right to vote) as majority members. Depending on the country, they are distinct from the national majority due to different historical and political experiences, a longstanding connection with a given territory, and/or a different language. We chose historical national majorities in order to keep constant as many contextual factors as possible which allows us to more accurately test our hypothesis based on minority-majority relations as such (i.e., group size and its implications for political influence and power). A limited number of European countries are available to test our majority-minority asymmetry hypothesis in a real-world setting.

*Estonia* and *Lithuania* are both countries where the majority group speaks the national language (that is, Estonian and Lithuanian, respectively). However, due to historically changing national borders, *national* minorities with common languages to neighboring countries also live in particular regions of these countries: Russian-speaking people in north-eastern Estonia and in eastern Lithuania, and Polish-speaking people in south-eastern Lithuania (see Barrington, 1995, for a discussion of nationhood in these countries).

*Switzerland*, in turn, is composed of a national German-speaking majority group and two national minorities, the French-speaking in western Switzerland and the Italian-speaking in southern Switzerland (both French and Italian are official national languages; see Dardanelli & Stojanović, 2011, for an analysis of Swiss nationhood).

Like Switzerland, *Belgium* also has distinct linguistic regions where two official national languages are spoken, in common with neighboring countries. The Flemish (i.e., Dutch) to the North are a numerically larger group than the Walloons (i.e., French) to the South. However, in the capital city of Brussels, Francophones are the majority, and at the national level, the Walloon “minority” speaks the historically dominant language, creating tensions for the Flemish “majority” (van Velthoven, 1989). Moreover, the Flemish perceive themselves as a minority in comparison to the larger, transborder, French-Speaking group; the recent success of Flemish nationalist and separatist movements illustrate this strenuous relationship with the Belgian nation (see also Klein, Bouchat, Azzi, & Luminet, 2017). As such, Belgium is a multi-group country characterized by a certain ambiguity when it comes to determining which group is the majority.

In *Spain*, majority and national minority groups are also defined by language. In addition to the Spanish, Castilian majority, there is, for example, the Basque minority in northern Spain, the Galician in north-western Spain and the Catalan minority in north-eastern Spain. Finally, while not involving *only* linguistic regions, the *United Kingdom* includes a national majority, England, and the national minorities of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The national contexts highlighted above involve national *and* regional minorities who all claim, to different degrees, legal recognition and political self-governance, demonstrating their sensitivity for equality and group-based justice. In the present study, secondary survey

data from the European Social Survey was used which restricted data availability only for selected contexts.

### **The Present Study**

Our hypotheses are summarized as follows: First, national majorities should support an individualized immigration policy prioritizing talented migrants more strongly than national minorities (H1). Second, national majorities' greater support for an individualized immigration policy should be associated with a stronger identification with the country in comparison to minorities (i.e., serving as a mediator; H2). In other words, national majorities should show stronger identification with the country than national minorities (H2a), and this stronger identification should be associated with increased support for an individualized immigration policy (H2b). Because our objective was to show that group size (and thus also political influence and power) drive these effects, and because support for an individualized immigration policy can also be a way of expressing negative attitudes towards immigration more broadly, support for restrictive immigration policies and perceived benefits (or threat) of immigration were accounted for as conceptual control variables.

### **Method**

#### ***Participants and Minority/Majority Classification***

European Social Survey data (ESS; Round 7, 2014) from six countries were used, including Belgium, Estonia, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK (total N = 9856).<sup>1</sup> These countries were selected based on the presence of national, regional, linguistic (except for the UK) minority groups within them, also known as historic subgroups that are formal members of each country (i.e., different from immigrant minorities). Therefore, only national citizens were included in the analyses.

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<sup>1</sup> ESS data is based on a sophisticated and standard-setting sampling strategy, using strict country-specific random probability methods that lead to highly accurate nationally representative samples (see [europeansocialsurvey.org](http://europeansocialsurvey.org) for more information).

Minority (coded -1) and majority (coded 1) classification was done based on the first language spoken at home in all countries except the UK where the region was used instead. In the UK, only those who spoke English were maintained for analyses. Since the majority group is generally overpowered and minority groups underpowered in representative survey research, the minimum cut-off size for minority groups was set to 150. All smaller groups were excluded from analyses, and only one majority versus one minority group remained in each country.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 shows the final sample size in each country, including the size of majority and minority groups.

Gender in the final samples ranged from 48.9% female in Spain to 61.7% female in Lithuania. The mean age ranged from 47.74 ( $SD = 19.21$ ) in Belgium to 53.37 ( $SD = 18.30$ ) in the UK. Years of formal education ranged from 10.89 ( $SD = 3.10$ ) years in Switzerland to 13.42 ( $SD = 3.69$ ) in the UK. Gender, age and education were controlled for in hypothesis testing.

### *Measures*

*Support for an individualized immigration policy* was measured with two items assessing the degree to which respondents believed that (1) “good educational qualifications” and (2) “work skills that the country needs” are important criteria to consider when deciding if a person born, raised and having lived outside the respective countries (i.e., Belgium, Estonia, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK) should be allowed to enter the country permanently.<sup>3</sup> Correlations between these two items ranged from  $r = .50$  in Estonia to  $r = .60$

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<sup>2</sup> As a result of this cutoff, the Lithuanian Polish minority, the Swiss Italian minority, the Spanish Galician and Basque minorities, and the Welsh and Northern Irish minorities in the UK were excluded from analyses. Round 7 of the ESS included 21 countries in total. While data from additional countries were also considered, minority groups were either numerically too small (for example Swedish minorities in Finland) or were not recruited during data collection (for example Corsican minorities in France).

<sup>3</sup> Two additional items exist in ESS data that are often used in conjunction with the two items from this study: immigrants should be able to speak (one of) the main language(s) in the country, and immigrants should be willing to respect the country’s way of life. While these items also speak to an individualized immigration policy (with an assimilationist orientation), they do not refer to the educational skill set required from “talented migrants”.

in Switzerland, and the response scale for each item ranged from 0 (*extremely unimportant*) to 10 (*extremely important*). Higher scores represented the belief that individual and merit-based criteria should be used when deciding who is allowed to live in the respective countries.

***Identification with the country*** was measured with a single item assessing the degree to which participants “felt close” to the respective country. Original ESS responses were reversed so that they were coded on a scale ranging from 1 (*not close at all*) to 4 (*very close*) and higher scores represented stronger identification with the country. The measure was treated as an ordinal variable.

***Perceived benefits (vs. threat) of immigration***, used as a conceptual control variable, was measured with six items assessing the degree to which respondents believed that people who come to live in the respective country make it a better or worse place to live with respect to the economy, cultural life, life in general, employment, welfare, and crime. Internal consistency of these items ranged from  $\alpha = .63$  in Spain to  $\alpha = .89$  in the UK. The response scale for each item ranged from 0 to 10 and all items were averaged to create a single variable. Higher scores represented the belief that the respective country is enriched by the presence of immigrants whereas lower scores are interpreted as reflecting perceived threat of immigration.

***Support for a restrictive immigration policy***, also used as a conceptual control variable, was measured with four items assessing the degree to which respondents believed that their country should allow many or few people from poor countries within or outside of Europe, or from countries with the same or different ethnic group, to enter and live in the respective countries. Internal consistency of these items ranged from  $\alpha = .86$  in Estonia to  $\alpha = .96$  in Spain. The response scale ranged from 1 (*allow many to come and live here*) to 4 (*allow none*), and all items were averaged to create a single variable. Higher scores represented

stronger support and lower scores represented weaker support for a restrictive immigration policy.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Data Analysis***

SPSS version 25 was used to conduct preliminary analyses and R Studio version 1.2.1335 was used to conduct a final multigroup mediation analysis. In order to maintain the entire sample of respondents, maximum likelihood imputation was carried out on all measured data (i.e., identification with the country, support for individualized immigration policy, perceived benefits (vs. threat) of immigration, and support for restrictive immigration policy items; missing data ranging from 0.40% in Belgium to 8.44% in Lithuania), except sociodemographic information. We first present descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between main variables of interest, followed by hypothesis testing.

## **Results**

### ***Descriptive Statistics***

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations of main variables, both overall and for each (minority and majority) group separately. Respondents were generally supportive of an individualized immigration policy and country identification was high in each country (means consistently higher than the midpoint of the scales,  $p < .001$ ). However, our two conceptual control variables, perceived benefits (vs. threat) of immigration and support for a restrictive immigration policy, were generally more clustered around the midpoint of the scales. For detailed information on descriptive statistics, see Electronic Supplementary Material 1.

[Table 1 here]

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<sup>4</sup> A multigroup confirmatory factor analysis showed that the factor structure of our measures (i.e., support for an individualized immigration policy, perceived benefits (vs. threat) of immigration, and support for a restrictive immigration policy) was relatively consistent across countries, CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.09, SRMR = 0.04. When factor loadings were constrained across countries, model fit was also satisfactory, CFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.09, SRMR = 0.07, showing metric invariance which is necessary and sufficient for comparing regression coefficients between groups (for model comparison cut-off recommendations using CFI and RMSEA, see Chen, 2007; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002; Rutkowski & Svetina, 2014).

### ***Bivariate Correlations***

Table 2 shows overall bivariate correlations between main variables. Mostly in line with our expectations, stronger identification with the country was associated with increased support for an individualized immigration policy (H2b) in four out of six countries.

Identification with the country was generally associated with weaker perceived benefits of immigration (or greater perceived threat) and increased support for a restrictive immigration policy (especially in Switzerland), with the exception of the UK where the reverse was true.

In *all* countries, support for an individualized immigration policy was associated with *weaker* perceived benefits of immigration (i.e., *stronger* perceived threat) and with *increased* support for a restrictive immigration policy. This shows that support for an individualized immigration policy can indeed reflect negative attitudes towards immigrants and immigration, further underscoring the need to control for these variables in our main analyses.

[Table 2 here]

### ***Hypothesis Testing***

Figure 1 shows our hypothesized conceptual model, tested in all six countries via a multigroup analysis.<sup>5</sup> Support for an individualized immigration policy was the dependent variable, the minority versus majority group was the independent variable, and identification with the country served as the mediator. Gender, age, and education as well as perceived benefits (vs. threat) of immigration and support for a restrictive immigration policy were included as control variables.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> We initially tested this model in each country separately using the PROCESS macro (v3.1; Hayes, 2018) in SPSS 25. These results are summarized in Electronic Supplementary Material 2, first controlling only for gender, age, and education, and then incorporating conceptual control variables (same as the fully saturated multigroup model).

<sup>6</sup> The same multigroup analysis was also conducted controlling only for gender, age, and education, thereby excluding conceptual control variables. Detailed information on this simpler model is provided in Electronic Supplementary Material 4.



The mediation model was first tested among the total sample. In line with H1, the total effect of group membership on support for an individualized immigration policy was significant,  $B = 0.19$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI [0.14, 0.24],  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.22$ , suggesting that majorities generally supported such a policy to a significantly greater degree than minorities. Moreover, in line with H2a, majorities demonstrated significantly stronger identification with the country in comparison to minorities,  $B = 0.10$ ,  $SE = 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.08, 0.11],  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.22$ . In line with H2b, in turn, stronger identification with the country was associated with a significant increase in support for an individualized immigration policy,  $B = 0.17$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95% CI [0.11, 0.22],  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.11$ . Consistent with our general second hypothesis (H2), the *indirect effect* through identification with the country was significant,  $B = 0.02$ ,  $SE = 0.00$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.02],  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.11$ , suggesting that majorities' elevated levels of support for an individualized immigration policy (relative to minorities) is associated with their stronger sense of identification with the country.

Allowing the structural parameters in the mediation model to vary freely across the six groups (i.e., countries) resulted in a perfect fit to the data (i.e., fully saturated model). However, constraining the structural parameters to be *equal* across the six groups resulted in a significant worsening of the overall model fit,  $\Delta\chi^2(15) = 390.49$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = 0.84, RMSEA = 0.12, SRMR = 0.02, suggesting that the paths differed across the six countries. We therefore proceeded to test country differences on each of the paths in the mediation model. By starting with the constrained model and by progressively releasing regression coefficients one by one, for individual countries, with each significantly improving the model fit (see Electronic Supplementary Material 3 for detailed information on each step of this procedure), we ultimately found a partially constrained model that no longer significantly differed from the saturated model in which parameters were allowed to vary freely,  $\Delta\chi^2(9) = 7.91$ ,  $p = .543$ . Six regression coefficients were released in this partially constrained model, namely path a in

Belgium, Estonia, Spain, and Switzerland, path b in Belgium, and path c' in Spain. Like the model in which parameters were allowed to vary freely, the partially constrained model resulted in an excellent fit to the data, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00, SRMR = 0.00. Results of this model are summarized in Table 3.

Hypothesis 2a (path a) was confirmed in all countries except Belgium, where the Flemish majority demonstrated significantly *weaker* identification with their country in comparison to the Walloon minority (95% CI [-0.16, -0.09],  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.37$ ). In all other countries, majorities demonstrated significantly *stronger* identification with their country compared to minorities (H2a), although the magnitude of the effect differed significantly between most of them. For example, the difference between majority Castilians and minority Catalans (95% CI [0.39, 0.50],  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.81$ ) in Spain was significantly stronger than in other countries, and the difference between Swiss-Germans and Swiss-French (95% CI [0.01, 0.08],  $p = .027$ ,  $d = 0.13$ ) in Switzerland was significantly weaker than in other countries.

Hypothesis 2b (path b) was also confirmed in all countries except Belgium, where the effect was non-significant (95% CI [-0.08, 0.21],  $p = .355$ ). In all other countries, to the same degree, stronger identification with the country was associated with a significant increase in support for an individualized immigration policy (H2b; 95% CI [0.24, 0.37],  $p < .001$ , calculated effect size ranging from  $d = 0.40$  in Lithuania to  $d = 0.56$  in Switzerland). While correlations described above (as well as analyses without conceptual control variables) suggested this relationship was non-significant in the UK, closer analysis showed that when the variance explained by restrictive views on immigration and perceived benefits (vs. threat) of immigration was accounted for, the relationship indeed became significant and positive for this country (see Electronic Supplementary Material 2).

Hypothesis 1 (path c) was confirmed in all countries except Spain, where there was no difference in support for an individualized immigration policy between majority Castilians

and minority Catalans (95% CI [-0.21, 0.16],  $p = .817$ ). The effect of minority/majority group membership on support for an individualized immigration policy was positive and significant (H1) in all other countries, (calculated effect sizes ranging from  $d = 0.19$  in Belgium to  $d = 0.31$  in Estonia), showing that majorities in these countries supported such a policy to a significantly greater degree than minorities.

As shown by the *indirect effect*, our general second hypothesis (H2) was confirmed in all countries except Belgium. Majorities' elevated levels of support for an individualized immigration policy (relative to minorities) was associated with their stronger sense of identification with the country (H2) in the UK and in Lithuania ( $B = 0.04$ ,  $SE = .01$ , 95% CI [0.02, 0.05],  $p < .001$ , calculated effect size  $d = 0.25$  in the UK and  $d = 0.23$  in Lithuania), in Estonia ( $B = 0.07$ ,  $SE = .01$ , 95% CI [0.05, 0.08],  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.37$ ), in Spain ( $B = 0.14$ ,  $SE = .02$ , 95% CI [0.10, 0.17],  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.39$ ), and in Switzerland ( $B = 0.013$ ,  $SE = .006$ , 95% CI [0.001, 0.026],  $p = .031$ ,  $d = 0.13$ ). In Belgium, the indirect effect was non-significant ( $B = -0.01$ ,  $SE = .01$ , 95% CI [-0.03, 0.01],  $p = .359$ ).

[Figure 1 here]

[Table 3 here]

## Discussion

Based on representative national minority and majority samples across six multinational European countries, the findings of the present study showed that the desire to attract talented migrants and to implement an individualized immigration policy is explained to a considerable extent by membership in dominant, national majority groups. This was found above and beyond perceived benefits (vs. threat) of immigration and a general desire to restrict immigration and cultural diversity, thereby underscoring the importance of examining immigration policy attitudes through the lens of *both* intergroup (i.e. categorical differentiation between *host nationals and immigrants*) and intragroup (i.e., normative

differentiation within the immigrant category) dynamics. Indeed, the discrepancy in support for individualized immigration policy between national majority and national minority members is accounted for by majorities' stronger identification with their country and its purportedly individualistic values (see Jetten et al., 2002; Sampson, 1988).

The hypothesized mediation model was supported in five out of the six countries tested, including Estonia, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK. Belgium was the only exception, likely because of this country's unique political situation and linguistic conflict. In line with hypothesis 1, Flemish majority members showed stronger support for an individualized immigration policy compared to Walloon minority members, and even more so when general immigration attitudes were controlled for in the model. However, counter to hypothesis 2a, Flemish majorities showed significantly *weaker* Belgian identification than Walloon minorities. This is likely due to Flemish nationalist and separatist movements that reflect a strenuous relationship between this numerical majority group and the Belgian nation (see Billiet et al., 2003; Klein et al., 2017). Given this inconsistency, stronger identification with the country was not associated with significantly increased support for an individualized immigration policy in Belgium, even though the effect was in the expected direction. This effect was nevertheless significant in all other countries, in line with hypothesis 2b.

Aside from Belgium, analyses in all other countries indeed revealed that majorities showed significantly stronger identification with the country than minorities (H2a). Nevertheless, there was variation in the *magnitude* of the difference between the two groups. The difference was weakest in Switzerland, a country characterized by a "mono-national" identity where all national sub-groups are known to feel similar levels of Swiss national identification (Dardanelli & Stojanović, 2011). The difference was strongest in Spain where the Catalan minority expressed particularly low levels of identification with the country (consistent with strong Catalan nationalism/separatism; see García, 2013). Despite that no

direct difference was found between the Catalan minority and Castilian majority in terms of support for an individualized immigration policy (H1; possibly explained by Catalonia's relative higher status despite their numerical minority position in the country), the stronger sense of Spanish identification among majorities in this country was still, as expected, associated with an increase in support for such a policy (H2).

The multi-national contexts examined in the present study allowed for a comparison between distinct national majority and national minority groups, inhabiting specific regions of the respective countries. By definition, important socio-cultural variability between these groups and countries exists. One may argue, for example, that the Estonian and Lithuanian minority groups are 'different' from other national minority groups (and from each other) in the present study, for instance due to more recently changing national borders and citizenship regimes (Barrington, 1995; Tammur, 2017). Nevertheless, when comparing majorities to minorities, we indeed find similar patterns across the countries studied.

Our argument rests on the idea that in the countries under scrutiny, national identity is largely shaped by individualistic (i.e., economically liberal) values of self-reliance and personal responsibility. Indeed, according to the *Economic Freedom Index* (Heritage Foundation, 2020), among the 45 ranked European countries, Switzerland is currently ranked first, the UK third, Estonia fifth, and Lithuania ninth, with Belgium (26<sup>th</sup>) and Spain (31<sup>th</sup>) being placed in the lower parts of this ranking. This ranking roughly mirrors the strength of association between identification with the country and support for individualized immigration policies (the ranking has remained relatively stable over recent years, with only Estonia placed before the UK until 2019), although the multigroup analysis suggested the association did not significantly differ between most of the countries. We therefore suggest that identification with the country is associated with increased support for a policy based on

individual justice principles to the extent that the country's national identity *content* reflects these (economically) liberal values.

Prior research shows that national identification is associated with a desire to protect the nation from threats, predicting for example increased prejudice towards minorities and immigrants (see for example Verkuyten, 2009). However, the content of this identity also determines how attitudes and beliefs are shaped (see Pehrson & Green, 2010; Wright, 2011; Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta, 2014). In other words, individuals' values (and justice conceptions) are determined by the group(s) with which they identify and by the norms associated with these groups. While countries in our study vary in the degree to which identification with the country is associated with negative attitudes towards immigration (as shown by the correlations), negative attitudes towards immigrants is not the only way of understanding individualized immigration policy. Indeed, our reasoning concerning pervasive, underlying economically liberal norms and values is of equal importance.

On one hand, support for an individualized immigration policy attracting talented migrants is a way of national gate-keeping and thus restricting immigration, associated with anti-immigrant prejudice and perceived immigration threat (Green, 2007, 2009). Such policies imply assimilation expectations, as they require immigrants to conform to the dominant values and practices of the host country (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997). On the other hand, the innovation and *diversity* individual talented migrants bring to the host society can be considered to be just as valuable as their individual skill sets, as exemplified in Canadian immigration policy (Ferrer et al., 2014). As such, while implications are similar, there is a difference between accepting a talented migrants policy based on individual qualifications or based on the threat of cultural diversity (see Hirschman, 2013; Shachar & Hirschl, 2013): While the latter involves an explicit intergroup dynamic between the national ingroup and the immigrant outgroup, the former involves intragroup processes that

differentiate individual migrants as a function of their conformity with normative expectations. In the context of the present study, we do not wish to discount the (intergroup) interpretation of individualized immigration policies as being restrictive, prejudiced, and/or assimilationist;<sup>7</sup> rather, we hope to offer an additional perspective that brings together within- and between-group dynamics in the study of immigration attitudes. Indeed, we suggest that people (and especially majorities) endorse the selection of talented migrants because it aligns with their fundamental orientation towards (pervasive) principles of individual justice (Azzi, 1998; Iacoviello & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2015; Simon et al., 2001).

Our study had limitations. Due to the use of secondary survey data, our measures were not always ideal (as our two main measures were composed of one or two items; see however Postmes, Haslam, & Jans, 2013), some of the effect sizes were rather small, and the nature of the data was cross-sectional. Moreover, greater statistical power especially for minority samples would be desirable in future research, with more balanced proportions between minority and majority respondents. Given the nationally representative and high-quality data provided by the European Social Survey, however, we are confident in the stability of our results. Indeed, our overall model was successfully replicated in five out of six countries and effects were only conflicting when asymmetric intergroup criteria (i.e., power and size) were ambiguous, particularly in Belgium. In order to provide further evidence for our conclusions, future research should incorporate experimental work to avoid post-hoc explanations related

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<sup>7</sup> This reasoning would suggest our effects should be most pronounced among those with negative immigration attitudes. In order to test this assumption, we conducted an exploratory analysis in which perceived benefits (vs. threat) of immigration and support for a restrictive immigration policy were used as respective moderators of path c in the mediation model. Results converged for both variables and showed that, in general (without distinguishing between countries), majorities supported an individualized immigration policy significantly more strongly than minorities when they perceived *benefits* of immigration (rather than threats; or only when they showed weak support for a restrictive immigration policy). An examination of each country separately showed that Belgium and Switzerland were driving this effect, although the direction of the interaction was the same in all countries. These findings are inconsistent with the idea that support for individualized immigration policy is prejudice in disguise.

to national circumstances and to systematically determine which factors of national group asymmetry (e.g., numeric size, political power) drives the observed effects.

### **Conclusion**

Past research has studied multiculturalism mainly as an ideology and as a set of policies that favour minorities, associated with low levels of prejudice and with justice conceptions based on principles of intergroup equality and need. Yet, despite its restrictive and prejudicial connotation, the idea of prioritizing “talented migrants” is often understood as a way of supporting a specific, economic and instrumental type of multiculturalism (see Kauff et al., 2019; May, 2016), based instead on pervasive ideological principles of individual merit and equity. Through this lens, the present study introduces a novel angle for the study of multiculturalism, highlighting a normative, individual justice-based facet that is generally more attractive for majorities than for minorities (see Gündemir et al., 2017; Ward, Gale, Staerklé, & Stuart, 2018). This facet involves “cherry picking” through the targeting of “useful” migrants. Thereby, we hope that this research takes a step beyond the binary intergroup opposition between national majorities and immigrant minorities in the study of immigration attitudes and multiculturalism.



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Figure 1. Mediation Model: Identification with the Country Explains Why Support for Individualized Immigration Policy Differs by Minority-Majority Group.

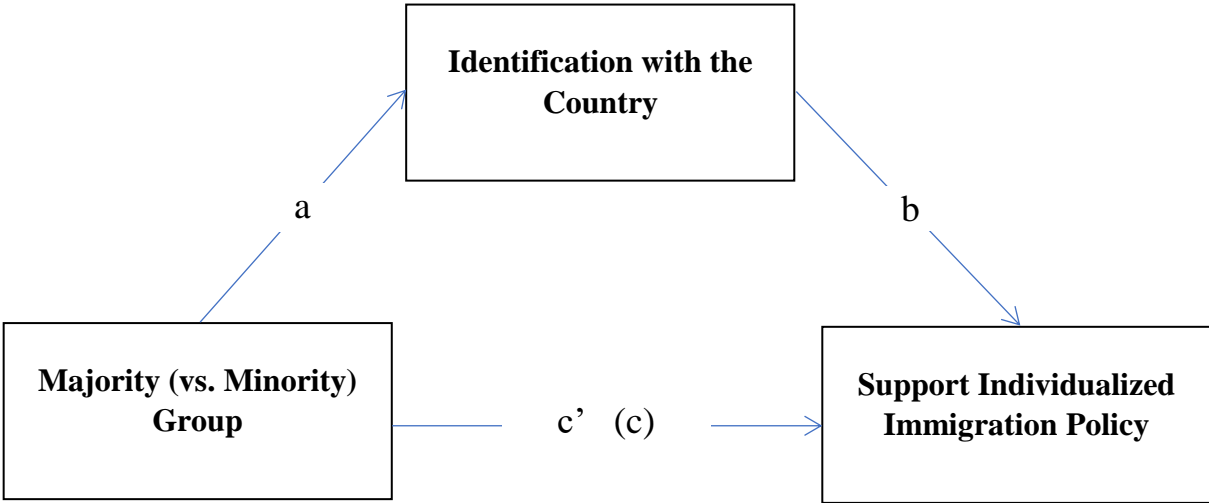




Table 1

*Sample Overview for Majority and Minority Group Membership and Respective Means and Standard Deviations of Main Variables*

Country	<i>n</i>	Individualized Immigration Policy	Identification with the Country	Perceived Benefits of Immigration	Restrictive Immigration Policy
Belgium	1560	6.57 (2.11)	3.17 (0.69)	4.40 (1.62)	2.41 (0.74)
Flemish majority	894	6.66 (1.93)	3.08 (0.67)	4.49 (1.53)	2.39 (0.73)
Wallonian minority	666	6.45 (2.32)	3.29 (0.71)	4.29 (1.73)	2.44 (0.76)
Estonia	1613	7.32 (1.98)	3.40 (0.66)	4.98 (1.53)	2.55 (0.69)
Estonian majority	1257	7.38 (1.89)	3.50 (0.59)	5.05 (1.46)	2.54 (0.68)
Russian minority	356	7.12 (2.27)	3.04 (0.77)	4.74 (1.74)	2.60 (0.74)
Lithuania	2103	7.32 (2.00)	3.24 (0.66)	4.76 (1.52)	2.52 (0.81)
Lithuanian majority	1945	7.35 (2.02)	3.26 (0.66)	4.72 (1.54)	2.54 (0.81)
Russian minority	158	7.02 (1.73)	3.01 (0.62)	5.17 (1.20)	2.30 (0.70)
Spain	1656	6.28 (2.51)	3.43 (0.76)	4.63 (1.32)	2.33 (0.88)
Castilian majority	1476	6.27 (2.47)	3.53 (0.66)	4.66 (1.30)	2.35 (0.88)
Catalan minority	180	6.33 (2.80)	2.63 (1.01)	4.38 (1.49)	2.23 (0.88)
Switzerland	1084	6.51 (2.22)	3.58 (0.56)	5.09 (1.44)	2.24 (0.62)
German majority	826	6.69 (2.10)	3.61 (0.54)	4.93 (1.41)	2.29 (0.62)
French minority	258	5.95 (2.48)	3.47 (0.62)	5.60 (1.39)	2.10 (0.60)
UK	1840	7.29 (1.98)	3.16 (0.80)	4.45 (1.93)	2.57 (0.78)
English majority	1648	7.34 (1.94)	3.18 (0.79)	4.42 (1.92)	2.59 (0.77)
Scottish minority	192	6.84 (2.22)	2.98 (0.92)	4.74 (1.97)	2.44 (0.79)

*Note.* Response scale 0-10 for individualized immigration policy and perceived benefits of immigration; 1-4 for identification with the country and restrictive immigration policy.

Table 2

*Bivariate Correlations Between Main Variables of Interest*

Country		CountryID	BenefitIM	RestrictPolicy
Belgium	IndivPolicy	.04 <sup>^</sup>	-.28***	.33***
	CountryID		-.01	.06*
	BenefitIM			-.63***
Estonia	IndivPolicy	.17***	-.06*	.20***
	CountryID		-.02	.08**
	BenefitIM			-.60***
Lithuania	IndivPolicy	.14***	-.08***	.20***
	CountryID		.01	.02
	BenefitIM			-.53***
Spain	IndivPolicy	.11***	-.24***	.29***
	CountryID		-.02	.16***
	BenefitIM			-.50***
Switzerland	IndivPolicy	.16***	-.24***	.33***
	CountryID		-.12***	.14***
	BenefitIM			-.57***
UK	IndivPolicy	-.03	-.33***	.37***
	CountryID		.20***	-.12***
	BenefitIM			-.67***

*Note.* ‘CountryID’: Identification with the country; ‘IndivPolicy’: Support for an individualized immigration policy; ‘BenefitIM’: Perceived benefits (vs. threat) of immigration; ‘RestrictPolicy’: Support for a restrictive immigration policy.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*  $p < .05$ , ^  $p < .10$ .

Table 3

*Summary of Mediation Model 7 Results (Unstandardized Coefficients and Standard Errors)  
for Six Countries.*

Path	a	b	c'	c	Indirect effect
	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>	<i>B (SE)</i>	
Belgium	-.12*** (.02)	.07 (.07)	.12*** (.03)	.11*** (.03)	x
Estonia	.22*** (.02)	.31*** (.03)	.12*** (.03)	.18*** (.03)	✓
Lithuania	.12*** (.02)	.31*** (.03)	.12*** (.03)	.15*** (.03)	✓
Spain	.45*** (.03)	.31*** (.03)	-.16 (.10)	-.02 (.10)	✓
Switzerland	.04* (.02)	.31*** (.03)	.12*** (.03)	.13*** (.03)	✓
UK	.12*** (.02)	.31*** (.03)	.12*** (.03)	.15*** (.03)	✓

*Note.* Paths refer to those shown in Figure 1. Majority group is coded 1 and minority group -1. Gender, age, education, perceived benefits (vs. threat) of immigration and support for a restrictive immigration policy included as control variables. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*  $p < .05$ .