

Status, Relative Deprivation and Moral Devaluation Of Immigrants

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Abstract:

Immigration has been a prominent political issue for decades, but particularly so with rising national populism. To understand current anti-immigration opinion, we turn to the concept of relative deprivation, which, we argue, is fundamentally about entitlement and is at the heart of popular backlash against immigration. Examining the United Kingdom context, we predicted that immigration attitudes would be contingent on immigrant group status, with immigrants from low-status or poorer countries (Poland, India) more likely to be perceived as encroaching on the majority group's entitlements than those from high-status or richer countries (Germany, Australia). We further proposed moral devaluation (dehumanisation and distrust) as a novel mechanism (over and above prejudice) underlying the conditional effects of relative deprivation on support for formal (anti-immigration policies) and informal (hate crime) means of immigrant exclusion. A pilot study (n=245) and cross-sectional survey (n=490) results supported our main prediction that status matters: participants felt more deprived relative to low- than high-status immigrants, and this predicted stronger support for anti-immigration policies through higher distrust (but not dehumanisation). This research highlights the need to unpack the generic "immigrant" category and study anti-immigration sentiment in terms of relative status and moral devaluation.

Keywords:

relative deprivation, moral devaluation, anti-immigrant prejudice, group status

Introduction

Immigration has been a prominent political issue in Europe, North America and Australia for decades, and is increasingly so in the rest of the world as well. The rise of national populism, of which opposition to immigration is a defining feature, is reshaping the political landscape in a number of liberal democratic countries. To help understand anti-immigration opinion we turn to “a social psychological concept par excellence” (Pettigrew et al., 2008, p. 386): relative deprivation. Fundamentally, relative deprivation is about entitlement, which we argue is at the heart of the backlash against immigration. Examining the United Kingdom context, we argue that people perceive immigration particularly from lower status countries as an encroachment on their entitlements and respond by derogating immigrants’ moral qualities which supports both formal and informal means of excluding them.

Relative deprivation and exclusion of immigrants

People experience relative deprivation when they see themselves as lacking something they want and deserve, generally based on comparisons with others (Crosby, 1976; Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966). For example, relative deprivation can be provoked by having less than others in relation to whom we feel (at least) equally entitled. Even though relative deprivation is often measured by asking participants to compare ingroup and outgroup resources without explicit reference to entitlement, judgements of the latter have consistently been theorised to be part of any actual experience of relative deprivation (Crosby, 1976 ; Gurr, 1970 ; Pettigrew, 1967; Taylor, 2002). The role of entitlement judgements must be stressed because it is perfectly possible for inequalities (such as differing salary levels between occupations) to exist without any sense of relative deprivation.

The centrality of entitlement judgements means that relative deprivation is not only observed among subordinate groups but also advantaged groups (Runciman, 1966). Ethnic groups whose status and resources advantage them over others nonetheless experience

relative deprivation if they think lower-status outgroups receive *undeserved* assistance (Kinder & Sears, 1981; Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2007). Similarly, ‘host’ populations can feel deprived in relation to objectively worse-off immigrants if they think the latter are making undeserved gains (Ellemers & Bos, 1998; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995).

Scepticism about the ‘deservingness’ of immigrants is a salient feature of anti-immigrant opinion. For instance, the phenomenon of ‘welfare chauvinism’, whereby people are less accepting of welfare spending for immigrants than for native-born citizens, suggests a judgement of inferior entitlement (Reeskens & Oorschot, 2012). The principle of ‘autochtony’ (the idea that earlier inhabitants of a place are more entitled to it than newcomers) is also fundamentally about immigrants’ lesser entitlements (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013).

The form of relative deprivation provoked by threatened advantage is conceptually similar to Blumer’s (1958) notion of ‘sense of group position’, in which a shared feeling of entitlement to privileged access in certain domains is critical (Taylor, 2002). This could include jobs, business or educational opportunities, influence in institutions, places, and even intimate relations. When combined with a perceived encroachment on these proprietary claims by an outgroup, the result is hostility motivating a defence of group relations as they ‘should’ be. Blumer’s account is functionalist: hostility arising from violated group position functions to coordinate ingroup action in defence of the entitlements upon which the outgroup is encroaching.

The relationship between relative deprivation and outgroup hostility is well established (Appelgryn & Nieuwoudt, 1988; Duckitt & Mphuthing, 2002; Grant & Brown, 1995; Tripathi & Srivastava, 1981; Vanneman & Pettigrew, 1972), including in the case of anti-immigrant prejudice (Ellemers & Bos, 1998; Pettigrew et al., 2008; Pettigrew &

Meertens, 1995). Extending this, we suggest that host populations' sense of deprivation in relation to immigrants elicits reactions that serve to defend these entitlements.

One formal and explicit way in which group entitlements are defended from immigrants is through policies that restrict foreign nationals' ability to enter, work and settle in the country. Conversely, informal means of exclusion include verbal or physical attacks that aim to intimidate immigrant groups into withdrawal, often termed hate crime (Dancygier & Laitin, 2014; King, Messner, & Baller, 2009). Qualitative work suggests that perpetrators of hate crime view their actions as defence of their communities against encroachment (McKeever, Reed, Pehrson, Storey, & Cohrs, 2013), which is consistent with findings that such attacks are more frequent in contexts where there are recent increases in minority populations that may still be quite small in absolute terms (Green, Strolovitch, & Wong, 1998; Stacey, Carbone-López, & Rosenfeld, 2011). While direct physical or verbal attack is generally perpetrated by small numbers of people, a wider population may tend tacit approval (Pehrson, Gheorghiu, & Ireland, 2012). Both restrictive immigration policy and support for hate crimes, then, are plausible means of exclusion that may be pursued by people who feel relatively deprived in relation to immigrants.

The Moral Devaluation of Immigrants

The denial of others' moral qualities, which we term 'moral devaluation', has played a key role in legitimising violence and exclusion, historically as well as in the present; those situated outside the boundaries of one's moral community are more easily seen as unworthy of just treatment (Opatow, 1990). We argue that the notion of moral devaluation has not received sufficient research attention when studying public opinion on immigration despite it being central to anti-immigrant politics since the introduction of the first immigration controls (at least in the US and Europe) in the 19th century when Chinese and Jewish

immigrants to the US and UK were deemed morally undesirable (Miller, 2018), and remaining so today (see also Fassin, 2008; Wills, 2018).

We consider two ways in which immigrants are represented as immoral. The first, outgroup distrust, characterises the outgroup as having bad intentions, such as wanting to take advantage of the ingroup (Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007; Mitchell, 2000; Smeekes et al., 2015; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). Across different national contexts, immigrants are seen as untrustworthy (Cuddy et al., 2009; Eckes, 2002), and frequently characterised as criminals, frauds and parasites in the media. Migrants' intentions and refugees' suffering are continually scrutinised and dismissed as inauthentic (Bloch & Schuster, 2002; Casati, 2018; Lynn & Lea, 2003) such that they feel compelled to demonstrate their good citizenship by emphasising their honesty, self-reliance and participation in the community (Gast & Okamoto, 2016).

The second, a form of dehumanisation, represents others as uncivilised, lacking the restraint and self-control – that is, moral agency - that distinguish humans from animals and make moral actions possible (Bastian, Laham, Wilson, Haslam, & Koval, 2011; Kteily, Bruneau, Waytz, & Cotterill, 2015). Refugees are frequently referred to as 'swarms', 'floods', 'tidal invasions' (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2015; Khosravini, 2009; McLaughlin, 1999), weeds, rats, vermin, parasite and diseases (Goodman, 2007; Hogan & Haltinner, 2015; Santa Ana, 1999). Dehumanisation of immigrants elicits moral emotions such as contempt and disgust, and strengthens support for stringent anti-immigration policies (Esses, Veenvliet, Hodson, & Mihic, 2008; Louis, Esses, & Lalonde, 2013; Marshall & Shapiro, 2018).

In the present study, we investigate the importance of the moral devaluation of immigrants over and above more generic kinds of anti-immigrant prejudice. Based on a group position model of prejudice (Blumer, 1958), feeling relatively deprived in comparison to immigrants, particularly from lower status countries, strengthens both dislike of

immigrants and their moral devaluation in the form of distrust and dehumanisation.

Furthermore, we propose the two forms of moral devaluation represent distinct mechanisms underpinning the effects of relative deprivation on exclusionary intentions, i.e., strengthening support for anti-immigrant policy and legitimising hate crime. The characterisation of lower status immigrants, in particular, as morally unfit to belong to the same moral community thus acts as justification and support for outgroup action that keeps them out.

Immigrant Group Status

Psychological research on anti-immigrant attitudes tends to consider ‘immigrants’ as a general category. Yet, there is growing evidence that people prefer immigrants from richer countries over poorer ones (Borraccino et al., 2018; Brader, Valentino, & Suhay, 2008; Ford, 2011; Kleg & Yamamoto, 1998; Kustov, 2019; Sand & Gruber, 2018). Thus, the question of immigrants’ deservingness and moral qualities may be contingent on the national or ethnic groups they belong to and whether that group is of an equal or lower status to the majority group.

We suggest that immigrants from low-status or poor countries are perceived as a greater encroachment on ingroup resources, deserving less and taking more than high status groups, and thus are a greater source of relative deprivation. It is generally low-status groups that are dehumanised: the homeless (Harris & Fiske, 2006), the disabled and mentally ill (Bastian et al., 2011), Mexicans, Arabs and Muslims in the U.S. (Kteily et al., 2015) and traditional people (Saminaden, Loughnan, & Haslam, 2010). However, outgroup status is less clearly relevant to distrust: within the stereotype content model both high and low status competitive groups are distrusted (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002).

We might also expect different processes linking relative deprivation to exclusionary outcomes depending on status. First, while relative deprivation might lead people to dislike or distrust high-status immigrants, it is less likely that this would provoke dehumanisation

because representations of certain outgroups as uncultured and barbaric have developed historically, specifically in relation to low-status outgroups. Moreover, if restrictive immigration policy and hate crime are means of defending group position from encroachment, then we can expect devaluation of low status immigrants specifically to drive support for these forms of exclusion. Thus, while immigration controls are generally not framed explicitly as restricting immigrants from poorer countries in particular, we suggest that it is those lower status immigrants that people have in mind when they support such controls. Similarly, while hate crime can be experienced any immigrants (among others), it is derogatory representations of low status immigrants in particular that drives support for it.

Overview of the present studies

The data we analyse here were gathered in the United Kingdom in 2018, two years after the EU referendum. Opposition to immigration, particularly from EU countries, was pivotal to the Vote Leave campaign and the referendum provided fertile ground for it to gain legitimacy, as evidenced by an increase in racial hate crime in the aftermath of the referendum (Corcoran, 2016). We first conducted a pilot study with the aim of testing and refining a new measure of relative deprivation that operationalised perceived entitlement and access to resources of eight different immigrant groups that are widely considered to originate from either rich or poor countries. Our main survey then tested the specific mechanisms underpinning the effects of relative deprivation on support for anti-immigration policies and hate crime.

We hypothesised that British participants feel more relatively deprived with respect to immigrants from low-status (poorer) countries [H1] and also dehumanise them more than those from high-status (richer) countries [H2], and that the relationship between relative deprivation and dehumanisation would also be stronger when the target is low status immigrants [H3]. For the reasons explained above, we did not formulate any hypothesis

concerning whether people distrust immigrants more or less depending on their status, but aimed to explore this relationship. We further expected exclusionary responses to immigration – restrictive policy and hate crime support – to be driven by dehumanisation [H4] of primarily low status immigrants over and above general antipathy towards them. We also expected distrust to play a similarly mediating role to dehumanisation [H5]. However, our expectations about how exactly immigrant group status moderated this mechanism were dependent on the results of the exploratory analysis of how status affected distrust.

Pilot study

The aim of the pilot study was twofold. First, we aimed to develop a measure of relative deprivation that (a) assesses perceptions of specific immigrant groups rather than immigrants in general; (b) includes judgements of these groups' *access* and *entitlement* to resources relative to British people; and (c) identifies the most relevant domains (e.g., jobs, housing, healthcare) of deprivation. Second, we aimed to identify specific immigrant groups immigrants best representing those from rich or poor countries. We selected four relatively high-status countries of origin (Australia, United States, Germany and Ireland) and low-status (poorer) ones (India, Pakistan, Romania and Poland). These represent the some of the most frequent current countries of origin for immigrants to the UK whilst including a mixture of European Union (EU) and member and non-member states, as EU citizens currently have more access to the UK jobs market and public services than people from elsewhere.

Method

Participants. We recruited 257 British participants through Pureprofile, a market research company that invited participants from its online panel and paid them £1. Twelve cases were excluded from analysis because they completed the questionnaire unrealistically quickly (under 5 minutes). The remaining 245 participants included 127 men, 116 women and 2 people who declined to report their gender.

Immigrant target group. Participants were asked to evaluate immigrants to the UK from eight countries deemed either high-status/rich or low-status/poor - Australia, US, Germany, Ireland, India, Pakistan, Poland and Romania. Each participant had to rate all eight immigrant target groups, presented randomly to control for order effects.

Entitlement judgements. Participants were first asked to rate the level of access they thought that nationals of each of the eight countries of origin living in the UK *should* have compared to British people in five domains of resources (jobs market, the National Health Service, social housing, schools and benefits), with three response options: (1) “*British nationals should have priority*”, (2) “*British people and [country] nationals should be treated equally*”, and (3) “*[Country] nationals should have priority*”. The five domains were selected based on their prominence in debates about the impact of immigration in the UK. This enabled us to compute eight mean entitlement scores (one for each immigrant target group) across the five domains, where scores between 1 and 2 indicate that British people should be prioritised, scores close to 2 indicate that people should be treated equally, and scores between 2 and 3 indicate that foreign nationals should be prioritised. All Cronbach alphas were $> .91$.

Perceived access judgments. Following each set of entitlement judgements for a given country of origin, participants were asked to rate how they thought nationals of that country were *actually* treated in each domain. Similar response choices were provided: (1) “*British nationals have priority*”, (2) “*British people and [country] nationals are treated equally*”, and (3) “*[Country] nationals have priority*”. Eight perceived access scores were then computed in the same way as the entitlement scores. Group relative deprivation scores were calculated as the perceived access score minus the entitlement score. Again, all Cronbach alphas $> .91$.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 reports the means and confidence intervals for the entitlement and perceived access ratings, and the relative deprivation measure for each immigrant group. The confidence intervals indicate that the mean perceived access scores do not exceed two for any country, indicating that immigrants are seen as having equal or inferior access in these domains compared to British people. Moreover, perceived entitlement (of immigrants) was constantly judged as lower than perceived access, across all target groups. In other words, British nationals were seen as having priority, but not as much priority as they are entitled to. Thus, once we account for the theoretically crucial aspect of entitlement, we see that our participants did on average feel relatively deprived, and more so in relation to low-status ($M = -.52$, $SD = .66$) than high-status ($M = -.30$, $SD = .47$) immigrant groups, $t(274) = -8.84$, $p < .0001$, 95%CI: $-.28$, $-.18$.

Selection of domains for the main study. Two candidate short form (3-item) indices of entitlement and perceived access were computed for each of the eight countries based on items with the highest loadings in a series of factor analyses of the entitlement and perceived access scores for each country. One of these indices, which included the ratings for the NHS, schools and social housing as the three domains, showed consistent high correlations with the full 5-item version of the measure ($r > .97$) so was chosen for the main study.

Selection of countries of origin for the main study. There were no reliable differences between the ratings of the two rich non-EU countries (Australia and the USA, $t(241) = 1.09$, $p = .27$), poor non-EU countries (India and Pakistan, $t(241) = 1.38$, $p = .17$), or the two poor EU countries (Poland and Romania, $t(241) = .11$, $p = .91$). We therefore selected for the main study the member of each pair with the larger population of nationals in the UK (Australia, Poland and India). However, participants perceived Irish immigrants to have significantly more entitlement and less access than German immigrants ($t(241) = 4.94$, $p < .001$) most

likely due to the historically unique status of Irish citizens in the UK. For this reason, we selected Germany as the rich EU member country for the main study.

Main Study

The main study tested the predicted relationships between relative deprivation, moral devaluation (distrust and dehumanisation), anti-immigration policy and hate crime support. To examine differences in these relationships by immigrant group status, relative deprivation and devaluation (including general prejudice measures as control variables) were measured in relation to each immigrant group. The outcome variables, anti-immigrant policy and hate crime support, were measured only once and without specifying the country of origin, allowing us to test whether it is the moral devaluation of immigrants from low-status countries particularly driving generalised responses to immigration.

Method

Participants were recruited in April 2018 via Qualtrics, a panel aggregator that builds samples from multiple existing market research panels, and were paid £1.50. The sample consisted of 490 British adults who reported to have been British citizens since birth and were UK born. The average age was 48 years old ($SD = 16$ years; range: 18 - 82 years old). Fifty-eight percent were women (4% not reporting their gender) and 21 percent were university graduates. Participants tended towards the centre-left of politics on a 5-point measure of political ideology ($M = 2.91$, $SD = .78$), showing a slightly higher intention to vote for the opposition Labour Party (36%) than found in UK opinion polls conducted around the same time (27%; YouGov, 2018). Sample size was primarily determined by the financial resources available to researchers. Given previous comparable research (e.g., Esses et al, 2008) and the repeated measures design (see below), we considered the sample size adequate in detecting the hypothesised effects.

Design. We employed a mixed-measures design to test our model, with immigrant target group (Australian, German, Polish and Indian) as a within-participants variable. Support for anti-immigration policies and hate crime did not refer to specific immigrant groups, but to immigrants in general. Participants completed these measures just once. As we were interested in the effect of immigrant group status rather than individual countries, we averaged participants' ratings of Australian and German immigrants to represent ratings of high-status immigrants, and their ratings of Indian and Polish immigrants to represent those of low-status immigrants for the relative deprivation, feeling thermometer, social distance and distrust measures.

Procedure. Participants were presented with demographic questions, followed by measures of relative deprivation, prejudice, social distance, inter-group distrust, and dehumanisation which they had to rate for each of the four immigrant groups (in randomised order). Finally, participants were presented with the hate crime and anti-immigration policies support measures referring to migrants in general.

Measures

Relative deprivation. Entitlement and access were measured in the same way as in the pilot study, relative to the four immigrant target groups (Polish, German, Indian and Australian) and the three domains (NHS, schools and social housing) selected. Both scales were reliable across all immigrant groups (Cronbach's alphas > .88). We computed relative deprivation scores in each domain as the mean difference between entitlement and access scores for each target group.

We assessed the fit and metric equivalence of the relative deprivation scale between the low- and high-status target groups by submitting the three items to a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and constraining the factor loadings to be equal. Given the non-independence of participants' ratings, we allowed the error terms of factor indicators to covary freely

between the two target groups. The model did not differ significantly from the unconstrained model, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 2.65, p = .266$, showing a very good fit, $\chi^2(7) = 25.29, p < .0001$; CFI = .994, RMSEA = .073 90%CI (.044, .105), SRMR = .090.

Feeling Thermometer. Participants rated how they felt towards the four immigrant target groups on a 10-point semantic differential scale (*warm – cold, positive – negative* and *friendly – hostile*). The scale had excellent reliability across all four target groups (Cronbach alphas $> .97$). Employing the same procedure as above, the constrained model was significantly worse than the unconstrained model, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 8.02, p = .018$, although still showing an excellent fit, $\chi^2(7) = 29.99, p < .0001$; CFI = .996, RMSEA = .082 90%CI (.053, .113), SRMR = .023.

Social Distance. Participants indicated how much it would bother them (1) to live in a neighbourhood where 20% of their neighbours were from each of the four immigrant target groups, and (2) if one of their close relatives were to marry an immigrant from these groups (1 = *wouldn't bother me at all*, 4 = *would bother me a great deal*). The two items correlated strongly ($r_s > .75$) across the four immigrant target groups.

Dehumanisation was measured by an 8-item scale comprising new and adapted items from Bastian and Haslam (2010) depicting each immigrant group as refined, cultured (reversed), rational and logical (reversed), lacking self-restraint and being like animals, unsophisticated, backward, barbaric, uncivilised and not fit to live in a civilised society such as ours (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The scale was reliable for each immigrant group (Cronbach's alphas $> .90$). CFA on the scale items revealed satisfactory fit, $\chi^2(102) = 873.649, p < .001$, CFI = .924, RMSEA = .124 90%CI(.117, .132), SRMR = .095. Closer inspection showed that the item describing immigrants as 'refined and cultured' had weaker loadings for both low- and high-status immigrant groups compared to the rest ($< .40$). Removing it from the model substantially improved the model fit $\chi^2(75) = 172.437, p < .001$,

CFI = .989, RMSEA = .052 90%CI(.040, .060), SRMR = .030 without a significant loss of fit compared to the unconstrained model, $\Delta\chi^2(6) = 11.16, p = .084$. The final 7-item dehumanisation scale was highly reliable for both target groups (Cronbach alphas = .95).

Distrust was measured on a 4-item scale developed by the authors (e.g., “[Immigrant group] can be trusted” (reversed), “Most people in [immigrant group] try to take advantage of us for their own gain.”; 1 = *strongly agree*, 5 = *strongly disagree*). All items loaded strongly on one factor ($> .70$) and the scale showed good reliability for each immigrant group (Cronbach alphas $> .75$). However, the results of the CFA yielded a very poor fit $\chi^2(18) = 632.92, p < .001$, CFI = .759, RMSEA = .264 90%CI(.247, .282), SRMR = .141. We estimated a two-factor model with the trust and distrust items indicating two separate factors¹. This model showed a substantial improvement and excellent fit, $\chi^2(12) = 27.67, p < .001$, CFI = .994, RMSEA = .052 90%CI(.026, .077), SRMR = .020, and was not significantly different from the unconstrained model, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 0.64, p = .726$. Consequently, we included both trust and distrust in the full model.

Hate Crime Support. To measure the extent to which participants perceive as legitimate a verbal attack on an immigrant living in the UK, we adapted a real story reported in The Guardian newspaper (Khaleeli, 2016):

*This is a **hypothetical** scenario, albeit based on a real incident that has been reported in the UK. Please read it carefully and then answer the questions following it.*

“Architect Toni (a foreign national living in Brighton) had barely touched down at Heathrow airport after a trip abroad when he came across a group of men causing a disturbance at passport control. “There were four of them,” he said.

¹ While it is possible that this 2-factor solution simply reflects item wording (positive vs. negative), we could also argue that “low trust” is not necessarily equivalent to “distrust” or “lack of trust”.

“One of them shouted: ‘Why is this bloody immigrant in the same queue as we are?’ His friends were laughing. They were saying it loudly so people would hear. It was very uncomfortable. I reported the incident to the authorities.”

The hypothetical scenario was followed by six items measuring the extent to which participants considered this a hate crime and expressed support for the behaviour of the four British men: e.g., “The four men were having just a bit of a laugh.”, “The four men had every right to say what they did.” (5-point Likert scale: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). All items loaded significantly on one factor ($> .55$). CFA indicated poor fit, $\chi^2(9) = 118.00$, $p < .001$, CFI = .929, RMSEA = .157 90%CI(.133, .183), SRMR = .041. Inspection of the modification indices ($MI = 81.13$) suggested that we freely estimate the co-variance between two items (“The four men had every right to say what they did” and “The four men were brave to express their dislike of immigrants in public”). Given the conceptual similarity between the two items and the potentially more ambiguous meaning of the latter, we dropped this item from the model. The 5-item analysis showed a good fit, $\chi^2(5) = 28.52$, $p < .001$, CFI = .980, RMSEA = .098 90%CI(.065, .134), SRMR = .025.

Support for anti-immigration policies. We identified twelve immigration policy changes that had been proposed by government or political parties in recent years (from election manifestos), which we used to create scale items (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) – e.g., “Doctors and nurses in the NHS should have to check the nationality of patients before giving them non-emergency treatment.”, “Foreign nationals who commit a crime in the UK should be deported.”. An exploratory factor analysis revealed two items with poor factor loadings (.23, .08), which we removed from further analyses. The remaining ten items loaded $>.50$ forming a highly reliable scale (Cronbach alpha $> .90$). CFA on this one-factor model yielded good fit, $\chi^2(35) = 80.437$, $p < .001$, CFI = .980, RMSEA = .052 90%CI(.037, .066), SRMR = .025.

Political orientation was measured with one question: “Please indicate your political orientation ...” (1 = *very left wing*, 3 = *centre* and 5 = *very right wing*).

Results

Perceptions of high- and low-status immigrants

Means for main variables are reported in Table 2 along with t-tests for mean differences between high- and low-status target groups ratings (Bonferroni correction applied due to multiple testing; corrected $p = .008$). As predicted, participants experienced significantly more deprivation relative to low- than high-status immigrant groups [H1]. They also dehumanised, disliked and distrusted them significantly more [H2]. Cohen’s d effect sizes ranged from .27 (intergroup trust) and .52 (prejudice measures) suggesting that these were psychologically meaningful differences in perception of the two types of immigrant groups. Overall then British participants consistently perceived lower status immigrants significantly more negatively than higher status ones. Furthermore, the correlations for low- and high-status (see Table 3) provide indicative evidence that the relationships amongst moral devaluation, relative deprivation, anti-immigration policy support and hate crime legitimisation are contingent on the status of immigrant group.

Structural Equation Model

Given that immigrant group status is a within-participants measure, we accounted for the lack of independence between participants’ ratings of the two target immigrant groups (on relative deprivation, dehumanisation, intergroup distrust, social distance and feeling thermometer) by allowing the latent factors for these measures and their indicators to covary. All analyses were carried out in MPlus v7 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012).

We first estimated the measurement model using latent factors for all the main variables. The CFA indicated an overall good fit ($\chi^2(1128) = 2504.25, p < .0001, CFI = .955$,

RMSEA = .046 90% CI = .043, .049, SRMR = .0710), suggesting that the model fits participants' perceptions of both low- and high-status groups well and that the measures are conceptually equivalent between the two target groups.

We next proceeded to test our proposed structural model as shown in Figure 1 (controlling for age, gender, education level and political ideology²; adjusting for non-independence of observations; allowing the mediators to covary - see Table 4 for covariance estimates). The model showed a reasonable fit, ($\chi^2(1422) = 3313.74, p < .0001, CFI = .930, RMSEA = .054$ 90% CI = .051, .056, and SRMR = .140). Although the goodness-of-fit indices are at the lower end of what is deemed acceptable (Hu & Bentler, 1999), we note the complexity of our model resulting from employing a mixed-measures design and the large number of latent variables estimated with multiple indicators each. We conclude therefore that our structural model represents a reasonable fit under these circumstances (for a detailed discussion on this issue see Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004).

Relative deprivation significantly predicted decreased trust ($\beta_{\text{low status}} = .40, p < .0001, 95\%CI = .31, .49; \beta_{\text{high status}} = .18, p = .001, 95\% CI = .08, .28$), increased distrust ($\beta_{\text{low status}} = -.39, p < .0001, 95\% CI = -.47, -.30; \beta_{\text{high status}} = -.18, p < .0001, 95\% CI = -.28, -.09$), dehumanisation but only of low-status group ($\beta_{\text{low status}} = -.19, p < .0001, 95\% CI = -.28, -.11; \beta_{\text{high status}} = -.04, p = .272, 95\% CI = -.14, .04$) and prejudice (social distance: $\beta_{\text{low status}} = -.38, p < .0001, 95\% CI = -.46, -.29; \beta_{\text{high status}} = -.13, p = .014, 95\% CI = -.23, -.03$; feeling thermometer: $\beta_{\text{low status}} = -.38, p < .0001, 95\% CI = -.45, -.30; \beta_{\text{high status}} = -.20, p < .0001, 95\% CI = -.28, -.12$; see also Figure 1). Testing for the moderating effect of immigrant group status on these slopes indicated that relative deprivation is significantly more strongly associated with increased dehumanisation ($b_{\text{diff}} = -0.18, SE = 0.08, p = .02, 95\% CI = -.33, -$

² Excluding these covariates from the analysis does not change the results significantly – i.e., some regression coefficients become slightly stronger, yet they remain non-significant.

.03), increased distrust ($b_{diff} = -0.24$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = .01$, 95%CI = -0.43, -0.06), lower trust ($b_{diff} = 0.23$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .001$, 95% CI = 0.09, 0.37), and higher levels of prejudice (feeling thermometer: $b_{diff} = 0.52$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .001$, 95% CI = 0.22, 0.81; social distance: $b_{diff} = -0.30$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = -0.42, -0.17) towards low-status immigrants than their high-status counterparts.

Moral devaluation and generic prejudice. Contrary to our hypotheses, neither dehumanisation nor (dis)trust as measures of moral devaluation were significant predictors of legitimisation of hate crime over and above measures of prejudice (see Figure 1). Only social distance significantly predicted increased support for hate crime and only in the case of low-status immigrant target group ($\beta_{low\ status} = .32$, $p = .01$, 95% CI = .07, .56; $\beta_{high\ status} = -.03$, $p = .79$, 95% CI = -.23, .18). Yet, this was not significantly different from its effect in relation to the high-status immigrant target group ($b_{diff} = 0.39$, $SE = 0.27$, $p = .15$, 95% CI = -0.14, 0.92).

In relation to support for anti-immigration policies, distrust of low-status immigrants, but not high-status immigrants, significantly predicted increased support for such policies ($\beta_{low\ status} = .42$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI = .19, .65; $\beta_{high\ status} = .12$, $p = .26$, 95% CI = -.09, .33) while dehumanisation had no significant effects with respect to either immigrant target group. Testing for the difference in the distrust slopes between low- and high-status immigrant target groups again showed a non-significant difference from zero ($b_{diff} = 0.27$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = .19$, 95% CI = -0.14, 0.68), suggesting that the effect of inter-group distrust is not significantly different between the two target groups of immigrants. None of the prejudice measures were significant predictors of support for anti-immigration policies.

Taken altogether these findings lend only partial support to our hypothesis that moral devaluation measures would predict the two main outcome variables over and above measures of prejudice [H4-5], suggesting that the direct effects of moral devaluation and prejudice on exclusionary strategies do not reliably vary as a result of immigrant group status.

We next estimated the mediating role of inter-group distrust in the relationship between relative deprivation and anti-immigration policies, and its contingency on immigrant group status [H5].

Relative deprivation, distrust and support for anti-immigration policies. We first computed the indirect effect by multiplying the standardised regression coefficients for the (a) relative deprivation → distrust, and (b) distrust → anti-immigration policies support paths for low- and high-status immigrant groups separately. The results indicated a statistically significant indirect effect for low-status immigrants ($b_{low\ status} = -0.22$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = .002$, 95% CI = -0.35, -0.08), but not high-status immigrants ($b_{high\ status} = -0.12$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = .28$, 95% CI = -0.10, 0.03). A test of the difference between these two indirect effects did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance (i.e., $p < .05$), $b_{diff} = -0.18$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = .051$, 95% CI = -0.36, 0.00. Yet, examining the size of the two indirect effects (completely standardised) for low- and high-status immigrant groups, it is worth noting that the mediating effect of distrust is moderate ($\beta = -.16$) for the former and weak ($\beta = .02$) for the latter³.

Relative deprivation also directly and significantly predicted support for anti-immigration policies with respect to low-status, but not high-status, immigrant groups ($\beta_{low\ status} = -.43$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI = -.60, -.26; $\beta_{high\ status} = .03$, $p = .70$, 95% CI = -.12, .18; $b_{diff} = -0.62$, $SE = 0.24$, $p = .008$, 95% CI = -1.08, -0.16). Thus, distrust of low-status immigrant groups partially accounts for the relationship between relative deprivation with respect to these groups and support for anti-immigration policies.

Relative deprivation, prejudice (social distance) and legitimisation of hate crime. We also tested the mediating effect of prejudice as social distance and whether this process was

³ As the indirect effect is a product of the *a* and *b* paths in the mediation model, we squared the Cohen's standards (.10 for a small effect, .30 for a moderate effect and .50 for a large effect) for evaluating effect size so that .01 represents a small effect, .09 a medium effect and .25 a large effect (see Kenny, 2021; www.davidakenny.net).

moderated by immigrant group status. We found that social distance did have a significant mediating effect in relation to the low-status immigrant group ($b_{low\ status} = -0.16$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .015$, 95% CI = -0.28, -0.03), but not the high-status immigrant group ($b_{high\ status} = 0.01$, $SE = 0.02$, $p = .79$, 95% CI = -0.04, 0.05). As above, the difference between these effects did not reach the conventional level of statistical significance (i.e., $p < .05$), $b_{diff} = -0.16$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .050$, 95% CI = -0.32, 0.00. Similarly, however, the size of the indirect effect was moderate ($\beta = -.11$) for the low-status immigrant groups, but weak ($\beta = -.01$) for their counterparts. Relative deprivation also directly and significantly predicted support for hate crime with respect to low- but not high-status immigrants ($\beta_{low\ status} = -.21$, $p = .037$, 95% CI = -.41, -.01; $\beta_{high\ status} = .08$, $p = .38$, 95% CI = -.10, .26), but these effects were not statistically different ($b_{diff} = -0.41$, $SE = 0.28$, $p = .13$, 95% CI = -0.95, 0.13).

It could be argued that the observed differences in perceptions of low- and high-status immigrant groups are primarily driven by racial attitudes towards Indian immigrants. To address this, we conducted the above analysis comparing responses to Indian and Polish immigrants and found that participants tended to express more negative evaluations of Polish than Indian immigrants. We also compared participants' responses to Polish (low status) vs. German immigrants (high status) and observed the same pattern of results as in our main analysis. To conclude, we are confident that the differences we observed in the perception of high- and low-status immigrants are indeed a function of group status rather than 'race' (results available on request).

Discussion

We set out to understand whether relative deprivation, particularly in the form of encroachment by a lower status outgroup, may explain the majority group's readiness to exclude immigrants. First, we wanted to look beyond prejudice when assessing the psychological consequences of relative deprivation on exclusionary practices, focussing on

moral devaluation, an aspect of outgroup derogation that is central to anti-immigrant rhetoric. Second, we argued that the varying *status* of immigrant groups shapes evaluations of deprivation and the subsequent psychological processes leading to the exclusion of immigrants from the national group.

Overall, the evidence brings mixed support for the first part of our argument, but consistent support for the second, i.e., immigrant group status matters to how the majority groups perceive and respond. Not only did our British participants feel significantly more deprived relative to low-status immigrants [H1], but also they dehumanised them more [H2]. Furthermore, relative deprivation predicted increased dehumanisation in relation to low-status, but not high-status, immigrants [H3]. These moderation effects go beyond our hypothesis that relative deprivation would have a stronger effect on dehumanised perception of low- than high-status groups [H3]. British participants' sense of deprivation in relation to low-status immigrants is much more strongly related to their derogation than in the case of high-status immigrants. Although there was no clear theoretical reason to expect low-status outgroups to be distrusted more than high status ones since trust is usually associated with the competitiveness rather than status dimension of intergroup relations (Fiske et al., 2002), we found that distrust is differentially predicted by relative deprivation depending on the status of the immigrant group. This could be because participants perceived more competition from low-status groups, as evidenced by the significant difference in relative deprivation.

Over and above generic prejudice, there was some evidence to suggest that distrust of low- rather than high-status immigrants predicted anti-immigrant policy support, but not hate crime support [H5]. It is notable that it was *distrust* rather than low trust that showed this pattern. Although the moderated mediation test did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance ($p = .051$), we consider the difference in the size of the two indirect effects (moderate for low-status vs. weak for high-status immigrant groups) to be theoretically

meaningful for understanding the social psychological processes underpinning the evaluation and treatment of different immigrant groups, and therefore worth pursuing in future research with a more comprehensive measure of inter-group distrust and trust.

Contrary to our expectations [H4], dehumanisation did not independently predict support for anti-immigration policies or legitimisation of hate crime. One possible explanation is that its effects were mediated by distrust. Further analyses estimating the effects of dehumanisation after removing distrust from the model indicated that dehumanisation of low status (but not high status) immigrants predicted support for anti-immigration policies ($\beta_{\text{low-status}} = .32, p = .011$), but not hate crime support. The strong relationship between dehumanisation and distrust ($r_{\text{low status}} = .78, r_{\text{high status}} = .78$) is consistent with the view that both relate to moral agency. Being untrustworthy entails lacking good intentions ('proactive' moral agency), while being uncivilised entails lacking restraint and self-control ('inhibitive' moral agency; Bastian et al., 2011). Therefore, we might expect an outgroup characterised as immoral to be devalued in both ways. An alternative explanation for the poor predictive power of dehumanisation relates to the argument that what is being denied through dehumanisation is contingent on the nature of the inter-group relationship. It is conceivable that while dehumanising practices are commonly observed in relation to refugees, asylum seekers and, to some extent, undocumented migrants (Fassin, 2008; Miller, 2018; Wills, 2018), they are not so relevant to evaluating (legal) immigrants. One could argue that the more central characteristic of anti-immigrant discourse is the portrayal of immigrants as lacking in good intentions and therefore untrustworthy. Further research is needed to elucidate this issue. Thus, the independent effects of moral devaluation over and above those of generic prejudice suggest it is distrust (particularly towards poor immigrants) rather than dehumanisation that strengthens support for anti-immigration policies.

Although British participants felt deprived in relation to all immigrant groups (i.e., they thought that, irrespective of their country of origin, immigrants get more than they should relative to British people), this feeling was much more acute and consequential for the treatment of low-status immigrant groups. Importantly, it was the advantaged group's perception of encroachment over its resources by low-status, morally undeserving, immigrant groups that seemed to fuel support for anti-immigration policies (note that neither distrust nor dehumanisation of high-status immigrant groups had a significant effect on support for exclusionary policies).

Our research contributes to an existing, albeit small, body of evidence (e.g., Brader et al, 2019; Ford, 2011; Kustov, 2019) suggesting that anti-immigrant sentiment should not be reduced to a simple 'majority-minority' relationship but should be contextualised in the relationships of status and power between the majority and different immigrant groups (e.g., Latinos in the US, Indians in the UK), relationships which have been shaped historically by political and economic conflicts of domination and resistance. The concept of relative deprivation as it relates to the anti-immigrant sentiment is therefore intricately linked to group status, power and entitlement. Immigrant groups deemed undeserving due to their lower status, are seen as untrustworthy and lacking in self-restraint, and consequently unfit to share membership of the national group. The Brexit vote has often been attributed to the 'left behind' or economically deprived. Our research shows that while relative deprivation is significant in supporting anti-immigration policies, it is not because non-immigrants feel they have less than immigrants, but because immigrants are deemed undeserving of equal treatment especially if they originate from poorer countries.

Limitations

Most obviously the present study is limited by the cross-sectional design that makes it impossible to rule out alternative causal models. On the one hand, by investigating relative

deprivation as a cause rather than effect of derogatory outgroup attitudes we are following a well-established line of investigation that has included experimental tests of this causal direction (Grant & Brown, 1995). On the other hand, longitudinal tests are few and far between, and what evidence there is suggests that correlations between relative deprivation and outgroup attitudes are not always indicative of causality from the former to the latter (Duckitt & Mphuthing, 2002). This being the case, more longitudinal and experimental evidence is needed to confirm the mediated paths suggested by the present study.

Conclusion

The finding that immigrant group status shapes so significantly the advantaged groups' perceptions and treatment of immigrants, suggests that we need to start unpacking the generic category of 'immigrant'. Here, we focused on status in terms of immigrants' rich vs. poor country of origin, however, depending on the research question, the national and historic contexts, other inter-group dimensions may become more relevant such as religion or social class. Conceptualising relative deprivation in terms of entitlement judgements rather than mere inequality allows us to examine the experience of deprivation and its consequences in the context of advantaged groups. We end by proposing that it is important to pursue further research into the related notions of morality and deservingness, as they speak simultaneously to issues of inequality and exclusion from the moral community of those immigrants deemed to lack the most fundamental human quality, that of moral agency.

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Table 1 Means and standard deviations for entitlement, perceived access and relative deprivation (Pilot Study)

		Immigrants from poorer countries				Immigrants from richer countries			
		Polish	Romanian	Indian	Pakistani	Irish	German	Australian	American
Entitlement	Mean (SD)	1.36 (.42)	1.34 (.43)	1.37 (.45)	1.33 (.42)	1.62 (.44)	1.41 (.44)	1.41 (.44)	1.35 (.42)
	95% C.I.	1.31, 1.41	1.29, 1.40	1.31, 1.42	1.28, 1.38	1.56, 1.67	1.35, 1.46	1.35, 1.46	1.30, 1.41
Perceived Access	Mean (SD)	1.93 (.54)	1.91 (.59)	1.88 (.57)	1.87 (.57)	1.84 (.39)	1.79 (.50)	1.72 (.46)	1.70 (.49)
	95% C.I.	1.86, 2.00	1.84, 2.00	1.80, 1.95	1.80, 1.95	1.79, 1.89	1.73, 1.86	1.66, 1.78	1.64, 1.76
Relative deprivation	Mean (SD)	.56 (.71)	.57 (.71)	.51 (.71)	.55 (.72)	.22 (.53)	.38 (.63)	.31 (.57)	.34 (.57)
	95% C.I.	.48, .66	.47, .67	.43, .61	.46, .64	.15, .29	.31, .47	.25, .39	.27, .41

Table 2 Means, standard deviations and effect size (Main Study)

	Low-status immigrant groups		High-status immigrant groups		t-test	Effect size	95% C.I. for mean differences
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	
Relative Deprivation	-.47	.71	-.32	.57	-7.60***	.35	-.19, -.11
Dehumanisation	2.31	.89	2.08	.86	9.45***	.43	.18, .28
Inter-group Distrust	2.87	.99	2.55	.92	9.30***	.42	.25, .39
Inter-group Trust	3.40	.82	3.60	.74	-6.17***	.27	-.27, -.14
Prejudice (affective) [^]	4.53	2.33	3.78	1.96	11.60***	.52	.62, .88
Prejudice (SD) [^]	1.81	.87	1.48	.67	11.70***	.52	.28, .39

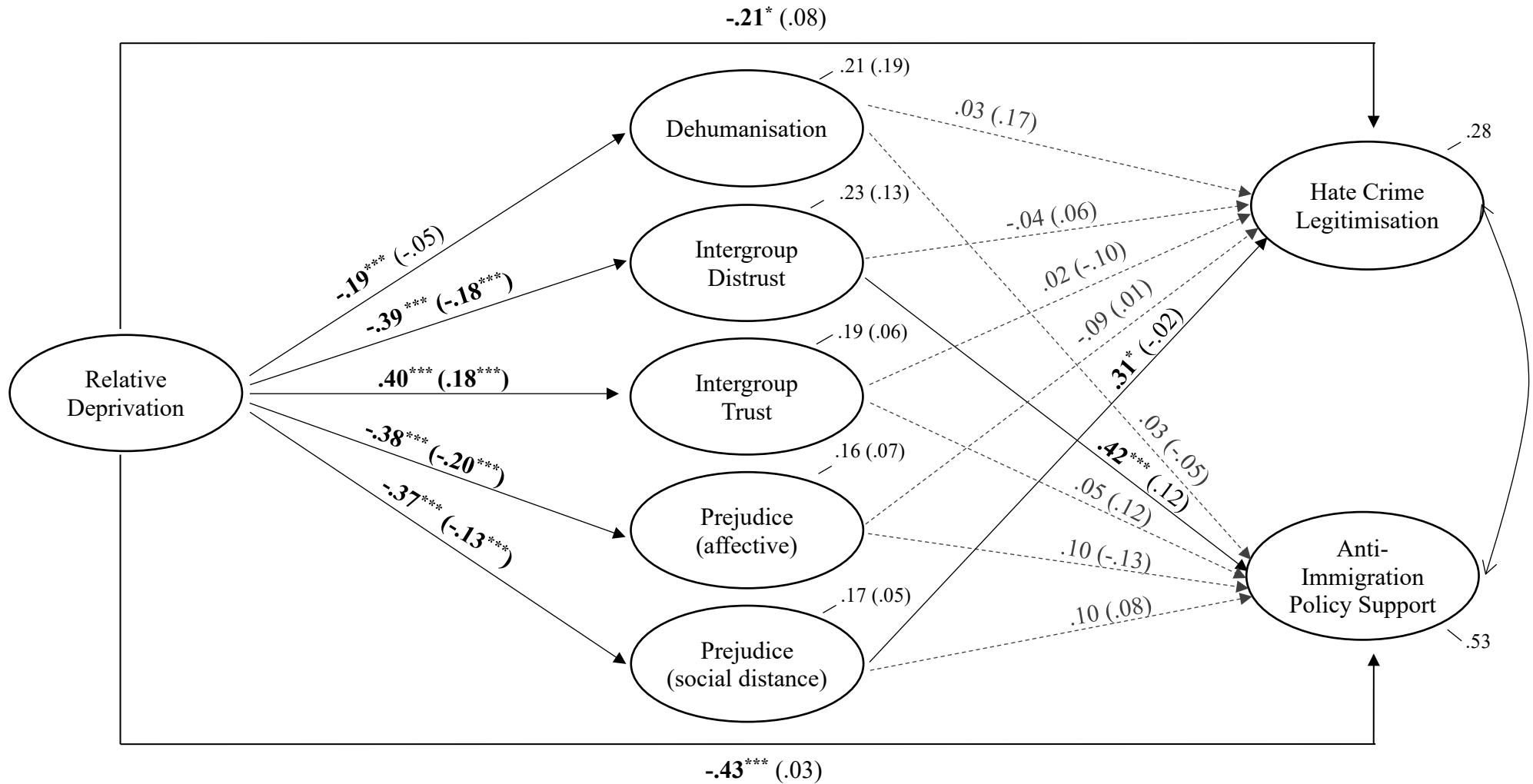
Notes: n = 487; [^] higher scores indicate higher levels of prejudice; *** $p < .0001$

Table 3 Correlations amongst main variables (Main Study; low-status immigrant groups below the diagonal, high-status immigrant groups above the diagonal)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Relative Deprivation	--	-.04	-.14**	.18***	-.23***	-.07	-.16***	-.44***
2. Dehumanisation	-.18***	--	.78***	-.40***	.41***	.52***	.42***	.18***
3. Intergroup Distrust	-.34***	.78***	--	-.40***	.41***	.48***	.37***	.30***
4. Intergroup Trust	.38***	-.48***	-.48***	--	-.44***	-.28***	-.24***	-.10*
5. Prejudice (affective) [^]	-.35***	.50***	.53***	-.55***	--	.32***	.25***	.19***
6. Prejudice (SD) [^]	-.29***	.59***	.62***	-.46***	.58***	--	.35***	.16***
7. Hate Crime support	-.21***	.45***	.40***	-.27***	.28***	.42***	--	.21***
8. Anti-immigration policy support	-.56***	.36***	.52***	-.32***	.36***	.38***	.21***	--

Note: n = 487; *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; [^] higher scores indicate higher levels of prejudice

Figure 1 Structural equation model of relative deprivation effects on support for anti-immigration policies and hate crime via moral devaluation and prejudice for low-status (outside brackets) and high-status (in brackets) immigrant target groups (Main Study)



Notes: $n = 464$; $*** p < .001$, $* p < .05$; all path coefficients represent standardised betas; not shown on the path diagram are the covariances amongst mediators (see Table 4) and control variables' effects.

Table 4 Covariances between mediators (Figure 1, Main Study)

	Dehumanisation	Intergroup Distrust	Intergroup Trust	Prejudice (affective)	Prejudice (SD)
Dehumanisation	---	.62	-.43	.35	.41
Intergroup Distrust	.67	---	-.52	.44	.48
Intergroup Trust	-.46	-.50	---	-.29	-.32
Prejudice (affective)	.40	.47	-.37	---	.23
Prejudice (SD)	.48	.59	-.40	.43	---

Note: low-status immigrant groups below diagonal; high-status immigrant groups above the diagonal; all significant at $p < .001$