Anti-immigrant Prejudice in a Post-Socialist Context: The Role of Identity-based Explanations

Running title: Anti-Immigrant Prejudice in Post-Socialist Context

Abstract

The model of ethnification posits that in post-socialist contexts ethnic identities are used as a source for political mobilization against ethnic outgroups. In Croatia, this is further amplified by collective war experiences. This paper investigates the association between identity-based variables, related to ethnification and war experiences, and anti-immigrant prejudice in Croatia. The study employed structural equation modeling of the data from a large youth sample ($N = 1,034$). Higher ethnic threat, lower cultural capital, more exclusive conception of nationhood and right-wing political orientation predicted stronger anti-immigrant prejudice. Ethnic threat moderated the effect of political orientation on prejudice: under high ethnic threat there was no difference between left-wing and right-wing individuals. As the results correspond to findings from Western countries, we argue that comparable explanations of anti-immigrant prejudice may be applied to non-Western and Western contexts.

Keywords. anti-immigrant prejudice, ethnic threat, conception of nationhood, political orientation, cultural capital, post-socialist countries

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Introduction

The last twenty years have witnessed a growth in the literature on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration policies (e.g. Czaika and Di Lillo 2018). This was in large part a consequence of continuing immigration to Western countries due to pressing social, political and economic conditions in less developed parts of the world. In accordance with these developments, the vast majority of the research originated from either Western Europe or North America, while "the literature on other countries is thin" (Ruedin 2019: 1108). Given the fact that it remains unclear if the findings from Western contexts apply elsewhere, it is important to explore contextual, country level influences on attitudes toward immigration (Bessudnov 2016). We believe that Croatia, as a post-socialist country with a conflict laden transition period, presents a context worth exploring in order to cross-check the mechanisms identified in Western contexts (cf. Ruedin 2019).

Recently, socio-cultural processes in Croatia were marked by the transition from state-socialism toward capitalism and by the coinciding 1991-95 war, following the dissolution of former Yugoslavia. Apart from other disastrous consequences, the war has increased social inequality as well as politically induced processes of *retraditionalization* (e.g. Ilišin 2002; Sekulić 2011). Accordingly, research has shown that national identification in Croatia has become stronger in the post-socialist period, both among youth (Baranović 2002; Ross, Puzić, and Doolan 2017) and the general population (Sekulić et al. 2004). Studies also highlighted the weakening of ethnic tolerance (Sekulić, Massey, and Hodson 2006) and the presence of xenophobic attitudes toward autochthonous ethnic minorities in Croatia, primarily Serbs, Roma and Bosniaks (CPS 2013). There is evidence that this rising intolerance was reinforced by the process of ethno-national mobilization, i.e. the process of gaining political support against other ethnic groups (mainly ethnic minorities in Croatia). Apart from elite's manipulation of public images related to interethnic conflicts and war events, this mobilization process also included a broader framing of inter-ethnic relations in the media, in education and in the cultural public sphere (Sekulić, Massey, and Hodson 2006; Katunarić 2007).

As ethnic intolerance was on the rise in the transition period in Croatia, it could have had consequences for more general attitudes toward the ethnic "other", including immigrants (Oberschall 2000). The main reason for this is that ethno-national mobilization often induced distrust toward other ethnic groups which can also be transferred to recent immigrants. Moreover, it has been noted that in transitional countries emerging from conflict, interethnic or interracial tensions may play a large role in shaping anti-immigrant sentiments" (Gordon

2017: 1715). Existing research revealed a general negative orientation of Croatian citizens toward immigration, evident in opposing pro-immigration policies and a strong social distance toward immigrants (Franc, Šakić, and Kaliterna-Lipovčan 2010; Župarić-Iljić and Gregurović 2013). This is so regardless of the ethnic homogeneity of the Croatian population, with less than one per cent[1] of citizens in Croatia being of immigrant origin ("Share of non-nationals in the resident population" 2017). Even after the accession to the EU in 2013, Croatia has "remained a transit territory for asylum seekers and irregular migrants on their way to Western Europe" (Gregurović, Kuti, and Župarić-Iljić 2016: 92).

Various explanations of prejudice toward immigrants and minority groups have been given. In this paper, we aim to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by validating different identity-based explanations of anti-immigrant prejudice in the under-researched context of Croatia. By doing so, we test theoretical concepts and explanatory mechanisms that were originally developed for Western countries using data from a post-socialist context. It can be expected that identity-based variables are highly relevant antecedents of prejudice in Croatia as they correspond with ethno-national politics and war-related influences that marked the post-socialist transition period. We test these hypotheses on a sample of young people as we argue they are especially prone to adopt their attitudes according to external influences.

Conceptual Framework

Ethnification and Anti-Immigrant Prejudice

The process of ethno-national mobilization and rising intolerance in post-socialist Croatia can be related to *the model of ethnification* of political and social life that marked East European transitions from state-socialism toward capitalism (Offe 1997). According to Offe (1997), in East European countries the ethnification of the politics of transition included a number of strategies in which political and economic interests of strategic groups and individuals were mantled in ethnic categories. As Offe notes, implicit in these ethnification practices was "the 'reductionist' notion that self-ascribed ethnic identities are more durable, more consequential and somehow more dignified than any other differences that exist between individuals" (1997, 51). On these grounds, ethnic identities served the new political elites as a source of symbolic

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[1]Of 15,553 citizens of immigrant origin in Croatia, 29.2 % live in the City of Zagreb and Zagreb County. The city of Zagreb and Zagreb County together include 25.8 % of the whole population of Croatia (Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011).

legitimation for collective action and political mobilization in the transition to democracy and new market structures (Offe 1997; Zaslavsky 1992). As a consequence of such politically induced ethnification strategies, interethnic animosity and distrust may characterize various aspects of everyday life (cf. Gordon 2017). Therefore, it can be assumed that the process of ethnification may have affected dominant attitudes of Croatian citizens toward immigrants. The plausibility of such a claim lies in the fact that in Croatia, as in other East European countries (Offe 1997), ethnic identities were constructed as the dominant cleveages of social life that exclude groups who are not considered to belong to the ethnic majority (Sekulić et al. 2004). In the Croatian context, these identity constructions were amplified by collective war experiences through which the threatening ethnic "others" were often demonized and dehumanized (cf. Oberschall 2000). This was largely done by politics and media who spread fear-arousing narratives about other ethnic groups. Although these narratives were presented mainly before and during the war, such cognitive frames were not entirely abandoned with the end of the war activities, neither by individuals nor by the public sphere (Oberschall 2000; Strabac and Ringdal 2008). Consequently, collective war experiences may have deepened ethnic polarization and the tendency toward ingroup favouritism as the latter became "routinized in taken-for-granted templates of how the boundaries of national membership are defined" (Hiers, Soehl and Wimmer 2017: 364). Such premise is in line with studies revealing the effects of war-related experiences in Croatia on higher levels of ethnic prejudice and ethnic nationalism (Strabac and Ringdal 2008; Dyrstad 2012). Since immigrants are mainly seen as ethnic "outsiders", these developments could have translated into anti-immigrant prejudice. In sum, we argue that post-socialist ethnification in Croatia and the collective experience of war affected representations of "us" and "them", which consequently shape attitudes toward immigrants and immigration (cf. Hiers, Soehl and Wimmer 2017).

According to the *"impressionable years" hypothesis*, social and political attitudes are more unstable and more prone to external influences in adolescence and young adulthood than later in life (Sears 1975). This could be explained by several processes typical for adolescence: peak in establishing social identity; increased sensitiveness to social evaluations and social norms; first experiences with formal political participation and the "primacy principle" - a temporary decrease in empathy (e.g. Van der Graaff et al. 2014). Consistent with this hypothesis, studies show that prejudice are most susceptible to change and contextual influences in the period of middle to late adolescence (age 14-19) (e.g. Visser and Krosnick 1998; Raabe and Beelmann 2011). A study by Rekker et al. (2015) indicated that external influences on political attitudes in Western European countries decrease during emerging

adulthood. It also revealed that high school age seems to coincide with a peak in ethnocentrism, suggesting a possible negative impact of external factors on prejudice during that age. Hence, we argue that youth that grew up in post-socialist countries might be particularly susceptible to possible interventions to reduce prejudice, more than adults living in the same socio-political context. Therefore, we consider it is especially important to understand the factors contributing to prejudice formation in this age group[2]. In this paper, we examine identity-based constructs formed through the process of ethnification and war-related influences that could be important for students' attitudes toward immigrants – conception of nationhood, political orientation, cultural capital and perceived ethnic threat.

Determinants of Anti-Immigrant Prejudice

Conception of Nationhood. A basic distinction in understanding conceptions of national belonging relates to civic and ethnic models of nationhood (Brubaker 1992). While the ethnic definition entails having a common ancestry, traditions, language and cultural ties (Smith 1991), the civic model is derived from membership in a political community open to all that obey the same laws and institutions (Habermas 1996). However, civic and ethnic models should be understood as ideal-types and not historical realities. They both form part of individual's self- and other-definitions regarding national belonging (Smith 1991). Apart from the evidence on the association between national attachment and attitudes toward immigrants, existing research also indicates the role of *conceptions* of nationhood in this regard. Sides and Citrin found that ethno-culturally oriented conceptions of nationhood "may baulk at fully accepting people of different cultural origins" (2007: 501), which is in line with findings from Pehrson, Brown and Zagefka (2009). Moreover, immigration-related attitudes seem to be primarily shaped by concerns over cultural impacts of immigration on the nation as a whole (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014). Although, it was shown that ethnic conceptions of nationhood are associated with more negative attitudes toward immigrants, some studies point to the fact that civic nationalism is not immune "from the vilification of out-groups" and that some varieties of civic nationalism may also be associated with anti-immigrant prejudice (Simonsen and Bonikowski 2020: 117).

Political Orientation. Opinions on the issue of immigration can be organized along the left-

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[2] We believe the effects would also be evident on adults' data, but we expect data on young people to carry more weight in this regard.

right (liberal-conservative) dimension of political orientations (Rustenbach 2010). Since immigrants can be perceived as a threat to traditional values and established social hierarchies, conservativism could lead to negative attitudes toward immigrants. Exclusionary tendencies of the conservative outlook gain extreme proportions in political programmes of radical right parties. By blaming immigrants as the main source of declining living conditions of various social groups (e.g. workers who "compete" with immigrants for the same jobs, people living in areas highly inhabited by immigrants etc.), these parties have helped to create anti-immigrant sentiments (Semyonov, Raijman, and Gorodzeisky 2006). Such political platforms include racist ideologies that stress the protection of national identity from foreign, especially Muslim, domination (Rydgren 2007). Research indicating that anti-immigrant attitudes strongly correlate with voting for right-wing parties supports the claim that racism and hostility toward immigrants get fueled by right-wing political mobilization (Baur, Green, and Helbling 2016).

Cultural Capital. Through education and cultural participation individuals develop skills to look at social issues from different points of view, including the ability to recognize and understand different cultural expressions (Houtman 2000). Hence, immigration attitudes can be related to parental or individual's education, cultural participation, as well as other forms of cultural capital. Following Bourdieu (1977; 1984), the association between these and other forms of cultural capital and immigration attitudes may be explained by the concept of habitus, i.e. the embodied "system of lasting, transposable dispositions" which shapes someone's relationship to the social world. As an unconscious product of socialization, the individual's habitus reflects a shared cultural context, i.e. cultural capital that, among other things, may enable tolerant attitudes toward "others" including the capacity to comprehend alternative interpretative frameworks (cf. Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999). On these grounds, a form of cultural capital relevant for immigration attitudes could be reading habits. For example, in novels protagonists might form friendships with members of minority groups, which could help reduce prejudice (e.g. Cameron et al. 2006). Cultural capital could also be associated with social representations that correspond to ethnification practices (Sekulić, Massey and Hodson, 2006) and that can shape attitudes toward immigrants. Empirical research supports the relevance of education for preferences in the political domain, such as voting behaviour or attitudes toward minorities (Manevska and Achterberg 2013; Van de Werfhorst 2001). Numerous studies indicate that low education associates with ethnic and racial prejudice, authoritarian values of the political right, as well as with cultural conservatism in general (e.g. Houtman 2000; Stubager 2009). In line with these findings and

theoretical considerations, it appears that anti-immigrant prejudice correlates with low cultural capital *in general*. However, apart from findings regarding the educational level, research on the association of cultural capital and anti-immigrant prejudice is still scarce (Manevska and Achterberg 2013). Moreover, core cultural capital indicators, such as cultural participation or reading habits, usually get excluded from cross-national surveys addressing the issue of immigration (cf. Hjerm 2007).

Ethnic threat and its interaction with other antecedents of prejudice. Perceiving a threat from an outgroup enhances prejudice and leads to discrimination and opposition to policies that favour outgroups (Stephan, Ybarra, and Rios Morrison 2009). Immigrants and other ethnic minorities can represent a concern to the individual and ingroup well-being, as well as a symbolic endangerment to national cohesion and ethno-cultural identity (Lewin-Epstein and Levanon 2005). Both types of immigration concerns may be perceived as ethnic threat - a threat to the well-being of the ingroup coming from an outgroup that differs in terms of ethno-cultural identity (Curseu, Stoop, and Schalk 2007). Beyond the direct influence on prejudice, ingroup threat can also interact with other antecedents of prejudice. In this regard, the interaction of perceived threat and political orientation seems to be especially relevant. Studies conducted in the aftermath of 9/11 found that enhanced feelings of uncertainty and threat led to increase in conservatism (Schüller 2015). However, research on the interaction of perceived threat and political orientation *as antecedents of prejudice* yielded mixed results. Some studies indicated that - in the pronounced threat condition - there was a larger difference between left-wing and right-wing voters in the level of prejudice compared to the low threat condition ("galvanizing effect" of threat; e.g. Albertson and Gadarian 2012). Other studies found evidence that immigration-related threat cues have an equal or even stronger influence on individuals who are not immanently anti-immigration - left-wing voters ("mobilizing effect" of threat; e.g. Lahav and Courtemanche 2012). The rationale for the mobilizing effect of threat can be further elaborated by the pronounced effect of physical security concerns. Along with being concerned over cultural traditions, a threat from immigrants might result with concerns over physical security. Since the security threat is a more general type of threat, this could result in a more unified attitude toward immigrants across the political spectrum (Lahav and Courtemanche 2012). This hypothesis was indeed confirmed in several studies conducted in the United States (e.g. Hetherington and Weiler 2009).

Just as under the high threat condition we might assume a unified attitude toward immigrants across the political spectrum, corresponding hypotheses might be applied to the possible moderating effects of threat on the associations between conception of nationhood and

prejudice, and between cultural capital and prejudice. More precisely, we hypothesize that under conditions of high ethnic threat there is a "mobilizing effect" of ethnic threat not just in relation to political orientation, but also in relation to cultural capital and conception of nationhood. In this regard we assume that a similar underlying mechanism might be applicable to all three identity-related constructs (cf. Lahav and Courtemanche 2012). To the best of our knowledge, there is no research on the possible moderating effect of threat on the cultural capital – prejudice link. Rare studies that investigated conception of nationhood in this regard showed somewhat unexpected findings. For example, in the study by Raijman et al. (2008), the effect of conception of nationhood on exclusion of immigrants was weaker for individuals who perceived high level of threat than for individuals who perceived low level of threat.

With regard to different identity-based constructs that can be related to the ethnification process and war experiences in post-socialist Croatia, we hypothesize that more exclusive conception of nationhood, right-leaning political orientation, higher perceived ethnic threat and lower cultural capital associate with stronger anti-immigrant prejudice. Additionally, we look into the possibility that these associations depend on the level of ethnic threat. In this regard, we assume that enhanced perception of ethnic threat, as a consequence of the "ethnic reductionism" of the transition period, could overshadow factors related to anti-immigrant attitudes. On these grounds we hypothesize that under conditions of high ethnic threat there would be no difference in the level of anti-immigrant prejudice between individuals with: (1) left-leaning and right-leaning political orientations, 2) more or less exclusive conception of nationhood and 3) higher or lower cultural capital. The hypothesized model of the relations is shown in Figure 1.
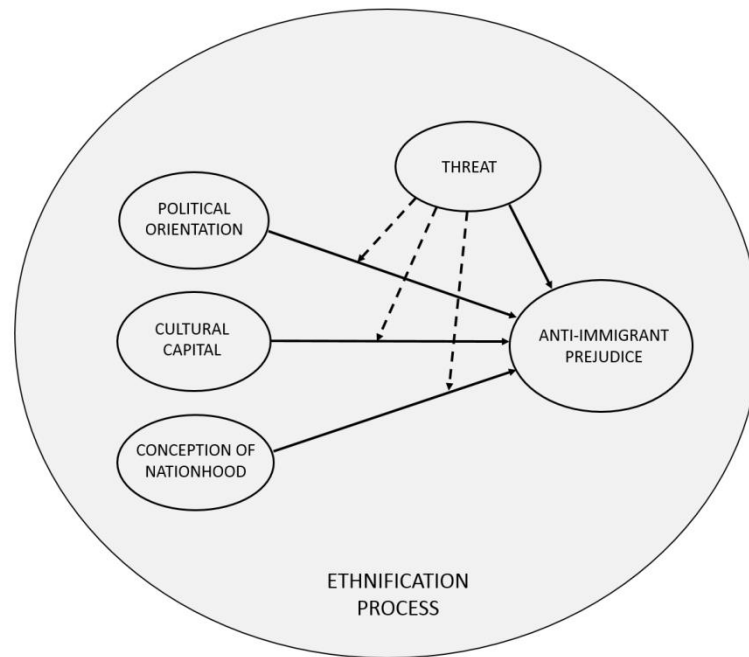
Figure 1. Hypothesized model of the relations between the variables in the context of ethnification process.

Method

Participants. The study was conducted on a stratified clustered sample of high school students from the City of Zagreb (capital of Croatia) and the Zagreb County ($N = 1,050$). The data of the 16 students that identified themselves as immigrants were left out from the analyses. The final sample ($N = 1,034$) included 54.4 per cent female participants. The age of the participants ranged from 17 to 20. For more information about the sample and sampling procedure see Matić, Löw, and Bratko (2019). Since the research was conducted on a sample from the Croatian capital wider area, one could question the generalisability of our findings on a national level. However, in planning our research we sampled both highly urban population (in the City of Zagreb), as well as sub-urban and rural population of high-school students (from rural surroundings and towns in the Zagreb County). We do recognize the possibility that *mean level* of the variables might be different due to the fact we did not survey a nationally representative sample (e.g. due to regional differences in expression of prejudice of youth in coastal and continental Croatia). Nonetheless, we do not find it reasonable to believe that *relationships* between different identity-based constructs and anti-immigrant

prejudice, that are the focal point of this study, could have been systematically affected by this.

Measures. The *Conception of nationhood* measure (ISSP 2013) assessed the importance of certain prerequisites for someone to be considered a true Croat. It consisted of eight items that followed the question "How important do you think the following is in order to be a true Croat?". The items related to different aspects of national belonging along the civic-ethnic continuum, e.g. "…to respect Croatian political institutions and laws" (representing civic conception of nationhood), "…to have Croatian ancestry" (representing ethnic conception of nationhood). The items were accompanied by a four-point scale ranging from "1-not important at all" to "4-very important". The measure was previously validated on a Croatian sample within the International Social Survey Programme's National Identity module (ISSP 2013). Cronbach's Alpha reliability value for this and other measures used in this paper is shown in the Online Supplement (Table S2).

As it is a common practice in related research (cf. Raijman et al. 2008; Sibley, Osborne, and Duckitt 2012; Gregurović 2014), *political orientation* was measured by a single item of political identification on a left-right continuum. The scale ranging from "1-left-wing" to "7-right-wing" was used, with a (non-labeled) neutral point of 4 that allowed participants to avoid the inclination toward any of the continuum ends if they wished so.

The measure of *cultural capital* included indicators of: (1) parental education, assessed on a six-point scale from "1-unfinished elementary school" to "6-completed postgraduate degree" (data for both parents were collected, however, only data for the parent with higher education was used; see Willekens, Daenekindt, and Lievens 2014 for the same approach), (2) students' cultural participation (three items measuring frequency of participation in different cultural or art events in the last year, e.g. visited museums, accompanied by a four-point scale with the following labels: "1-never or almost never", "2-roughly once or twice", "3-roughly three or four times" and "4-more than four times"), and (3) students' reading habits (three items measuring the frequency of reading literature that was not part of the obligatory school program, e.g. fiction novels, accompanied by a five-point scale with the following labels: "1-never or almost never", "2-few times a year", "3-roughly once a month", "4-few times a month" and "5-few times a week or every day"). The cultural participation and reading habits scales were constructed and validated in previous research on Croatian high school students (Baranović et al. 2015).

Perceived intergroup/ethnic threat was assessed using the widely used Canetti-Nisim, Ariely, and Halperin's (2008) items combined with items from Gregurović (2014). The measure

consisted of six items assessing perceived threat from national minorities in Croatia (e.g. "Some national minorities pose a security threat for our country.") on a five-point scale ranging from "1-completely disagree" to "5-completely agree". As in Croatia national minorities represent autochthonous ethnic minorities, we argue that these items measure a wider form of ethnic threat, i.e. threat to the well-being of the ingroup coming from an outgroup that differs in terms of ethno-cultural identity (Katunarić 1994).

Anti-immigrant prejudice scale (Matić 2018; Matić, Löw, and Bratko 2019) was constructed for the purpose of this study. The scale measures cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects of prejudice toward a general category of immigrants, which is a common approach among scholars (e.g. Van Assche et al. 2014). The construction and validation of the scale were carried out using data from a comparable sample of 332 high school students. The initial pool of the items consisted of 24 statements denoting different expressions of explicit (both traditional and modern) prejudice toward immigrants, e.g. not-in-my-back-yard rhetoric, lack of intercultural knowledge/interest, perceived endangerment/competition, acculturation preferences etc. In the item selection process, several factors were considered: item content, descriptives, skewness and kurtosis, non-spurious item-total correlation, Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted. Following the abovementioned criteria, twelve items were selected to form the final version of the scale, accompanied by a five-point scale ranging from "1-completely disagree" to "5-completely agree". Sample items are "After moving to Croatia, immigrants should abandon their customs." (cognitive aspect of prejudice), "I do not like getting in contact with immigrants." (emotional aspect of prejudice), "If many immigrants settled in my neighbourhood, I would consider moving away." (behavioral aspect of prejudice). For the complete item list, please see Online Supplement, section S1b). The final version of the anti-immigrant scale demonstrated adequate factorial structure, reliability and correlations with the related constructs in the pilot study. For more details on the scale construction and validation, please see Online Supplement (section S1a). The confirmatory factor analysis on the present sample demonstrated a good fit for the one-factor model of the latent construct of anti-immigrant prejudice (see section S4 and Figure S4a in Online Supplement).

Procedure. The data collection took place in spring 2016, during regular school hours. Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, as well as two institutional ethical boards granted their approvals for the study. Anonymity was ensured. Informed consent was obtained and students could sign up for individual feedback on results.

Data Analysis. To examine structural relationships between the constructs, structural equation

modeling (SEM) was performed using MPlus 7.0. Covariance matrices were used as input and robust maximum likelihood (MLR) as parameter estimation procedure that adjusts the standard errors for non-independence within the clustered data. The overall model fit was evaluated by chi-square statistic, comparative fit index (*CFI*), root mean squared error of approximation (*RMSEA*), and standardized root mean square residual (*SRMR*); using the cut-off values guidelines (Hu and Bentler 1999). Cultural capital, conception of nationhood, ethnic threat and anti-immigrant prejudice were modeled as latent variables with scale items as indicators, while single-item political orientation was modeled as an observed variable. It should be noted here that the analysis was based on cross-sectional data that do not allow for causality inferences. Longitudinal designs are preferred in future research.

Results

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's Alpha values and Pearson correlations among the variables are shown in the Online Supplement (Table S2 and Table S3). On average, participants had a moderate mean on the measures of political orientation (i.e. a centrist tendency in political identification), perceived ethnic threat and anti-immigrant prejudice. Participants showed relatively low cultural participation and reading habits. Only 2.6 per cent of participants had one or both parents with only elementary school education, 45.2 per cent had one or both parents who completed high school and 47.8 per cent had one or both parents holding a higher education degree. Participants had a relatively exclusive conception of nationhood, i.e. they considered various prerequisites as important in order to be a true Croat. All predictor variables (conception of nationhood, political orientation, ethnic threat and cultural capital) were significantly associated with the criterion variable (anti-immigrant prejudice).

Test of the measurement models yielded uni-factor solutions for conception of nationhood, ethnic threat and anti-immigrant prejudice and a two-factor solution with a second-order factor for cultural capital (see Online Supplement S4, Table S4, Figures S4a - S4e). The structural model demonstrated a good fit ($\chi^2(497) = 1,152.57$; $p < .001$; $\chi^2 / df = 2.32$; $CFI = 0.93$; $RMSEA = .04$; $SRMR = .06$) and accounted for 52.6 per cent of the variance of anti-immigrant prejudice (results summarized in the Online Supplement Figure S5). Ethnic threat was the strongest individual predictor of anti-immigrant prejudice ($\beta = .53$).

The results corroborate Riek, Mania, and Gaertner's meta-analysis (2006), showing that intergroup threat is one of the major determinants of negative attitudes toward various outgroups. Students who perceive national culture and national security more endangered by

national minorities might also perceive immigrants as more threatening for these and other elements of national well-being. The effect of ethnic threat may be interpreted as lower interpersonal trust; anti-immigrant attitudes may develop because of the uncertainty of the consequences that intergroup differences might bring (Rustenbach 2010). The results are also consistent with previous studies linking right-wing orientation with prejudice (e.g. Rustenbach 2010), as well as with the findings from two Croatian counties showing that positioning to the political right is related to expressing more negative attitudes toward immigrant workers and asylum seekers (Gregurović, Kuti, and Župarić-Iljić 2016). Further, the negative effect of cultural capital on anti-immigrant prejudice corroborates the theoretical expectations and some of the previous findings (e.g. Houtman 2000). It could be argued that an intellectually stimulating family environment broadens students' capacity to recognize and understand cultural expressions and identify with minorities' social position (Bourdieu 1984; Houtman 2000; Rustenbach 2010), although one should not rule out the possibility of the result being an artefact of more educated participants responding in a socially desirable manner (however, see Austin et al 2012 for the refute of this argument). Students who considered more prerequisites to be important for being a member of the Croatian nation held stronger anti-immigrant prejudice. This result echoes the findings from Sides and Citrin (2007) who demonstrated that valuing cultural homogeneity had the largest effect on negative views on immigration. CFA indicates that participants do not separate civic from ethnic elements of nationhood, which diverges from the findings identifying separate factors on comparable items (e.g. Lewin-Epstein and Levanon 2005)[3]. In our study, more exclusive conception of nationhood is associated with exclusionary tendencies toward immigrants, which might reflect a modern societies' view on national belonging as a "basis for self-categorization and emotional attachment", making immigrants "the outsiders" by definition (Sides and Citrin 2007, 480; see also Smith 1991). We argue that this exclusionary undercurrent of nationhood might be more pronounced in the Croatian context, where the transition processes were marked by post-socialist ethnification (Sekulić et al. 2004; see also Offe 1997).

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[3] The obtained uni-factor solution could also have methodological underpinnings (for the critique of the measures, see Wright, Citrin, and Wand 2012; for the critique of cross-national comparisons, see Reeskens and Hooghe 2010). Also, high school students might have not yet adopted the meaning of ethnic and civic concepts of nationhood and therefore might not be able to consistently differentiate between them.
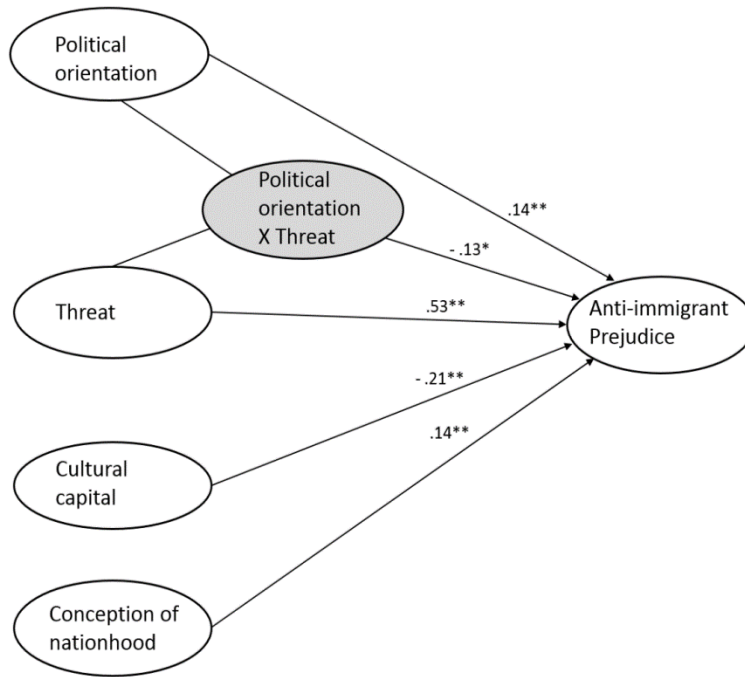
We also tested the structural model with interactions (see Online Supplement Table S5 and Table S6), using the nested models comparison approach and Muthén and Asparouhov's (2012) guidelines. We introduced one interaction at a time and tested for the model fit decline. The results are summarized in *Table 1*.

Table 1. The results of the SEM nested models comparison ($N = 1,034$).

Model	AIC	$\Delta \chi^2$
No interactions	76,378	-
Model with *threat x cultural capital* interaction	76,380	-3.55
Model with *threat x conception of nationhood* interaction	76,380	-3.96*
Model with *threat* x *political orientation* interaction	76,374	-6.58*

Note. AIC = Akaike's information criterion (the smaller equals the better fit); $\Delta \chi^2$ = - 2 x loglikelihood difference (distributed as chi-square); * $p < .05$

As evident from Table 1, the only step showing a significant fit decline was the comparison between the model with ethnic threat x political orientation interaction and the baseline model. A decline in model fit is significant if both an increase in AIC and a significant decline in -2 times loglikelihood difference criteria are met (Muthén and Asparouhov 2012). Both the comparison between model with ethnic threat x cultural capital interaction and baseline model, and the comparison between model with ethnic threat x conception of nationhood interaction and baseline model, resulted in non-significant decline in the data fit. The final structural model with interaction of ethnic threat and political orientation is depicted in *Figure 2*. Standardized regression coefficient for the interaction effect was calculated following the Muthén and Asparouhov's (2012) recommendations. A value of - .13 indicated a small size interaction effect (Preacher and Kelley 2011). When perceived ethnic threat was high, there was no difference in prejudice between left-wing and right-wing participants. When perceived ethnic threat was low, right-wing participants had stronger prejudice than left-wing participants.

Figure 2. Final structural model with interaction between ethnic threat and political orientation ($N = 1,034$).

Note. Only the structural part of the model, standardized parameter estimates and significant paths are shown.

This finding suggests that pronounced ethnic threat offsets the effect of ideological differences in relation to immigration issues. In times of social instability and (threatening) social changes, identity-based concerns could *overshadow* political differences in attitudes toward immigrants (cf. Lahav and Courtemanche 2012). In contrast to deeper-seated ethnic concerns, young people might associate political preferences with less enduring instrumental purposes (Ilišin 2017). At the same time, the effects of conception of nationhood and cultural capital on anti-immigrant prejudice do not depend on social circumstances marked by pronounced ethnic threat. This indicates the stability of cultural dispositions acquired in the family environment (Bourdieu 1984) and the strength of different affiliations with the nation (cf. Hjerm 1998).

Conclusion

In sum, our results show a substantial support for our hypotheses and are in line with the recent reports of national exclusivism in Croatia (Gregurović, Kuti, and Župarić-Iljić 2016; Ross, Puzić, and Doolan 2017). Differences in anti-immigrant prejudice among youth in

Croatia stem from a variety of factors that can be related to the process of post-socialist ethnification of social relations - the extent to which young people perceive threat from groups that differ in terms of ethno-cultural identity, how they conceptualize their nation and its borders and how they situate themselves on the political left-right continuum. The assumed undercurrent of post-socialist ethnification was underpinned by the fact that students did not differentiate civic from ethnic attributes of national identity, that ethnic threat was the strongest predictor of anti-immigrant prejudice, and that it moderated the effect of students' political orientation on prejudice. At the same time, the obtained stability of the cultural capital effect under conditions of pronounced ethnic threat indicates that cultural empowerment could have potential in weakening anti-immigrant prejudice.

In large part, our findings from post-socialist Croatia correspond to the findings of "western" studies, as both point to the role of identity-based concerns in shaping attitudes toward immigrants. We argue that the established associations of identity-based variables with attitudes toward immigrants in Croatia can be related to the process of ethnification of politics and social life in post-socialist context (Offe 1997; Sekulić 2011). With regard to anti-immigrant prejudice in Western countries, studies show that immigration-related attitudes are shaped primarily by concerns about national identity and preferences for cultural unity, rather than self-interest and economic condition (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014). If this is so, comparable explanations may be applied to Western and non-Western i.e. post-socialist contexts. One such explanation may be that ethnification, as a means for political mobilization and collective action, serves the interests of political elites in both non-Western i.e. post-socialist, and Western countries (Hainmueller and Hopkins 2014). Although right-wing electoral mobilization represents the most vivid strategy of such kind, explicit or implicit ethnification could also be related to mainstream ideological formulas for dealing with immigration and ethnic diversity in receiving countries (Sides and Citrin 2007). Furthemore, the full potential of immigration as a means for political mobilization was apparent in the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe in which "the room for the appearance of 'xenophobic entrepreneurs' mobilizing anti-immigrant feelings… has clearly expanded" (Zamora-Kapoor, Moreno Fuentes and Schain, 2017: 364). As such, the recent tightening of immigration policies in various European countries (Czaika and Di Lillo 2018; Reijerse et al. 2013) should not be understood as a political backlash (Czaika and Di Lillo 2018), but rather as part of a deeply rooted political agenda. We believe that, apart from the first-hand political interests (cf. Baldwin-Edwards, Blitz and Crawley 2019), the rationale of this agenda may also be associated with at least two broader perspectives that pertain to modern societies. The first

relates to ethnic values that continue to provide legitimacy for the boundaries of modern political communities (Habermas 1996; cf. Hjerm 1998), and the second to anomic effects of societal differentiation that can be moderated on the basis of individuals' ethnic and other ascriptive identities (Durkheim 1997; Nielsen 1985). As migratory pressures are not likely to decline in the near future (Zamora-Kapoor, Moreno Fuentes and Schain, 2017), these perspectives suggest that the potential for more exclusive policies in the immigration debate in non-Western, i.e. post-socialist, and Western contexts may be far from exhausted.

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