

WHY ARE IMMIGRANTS BLAMED?

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Immigrants are regularly blamed by natives for taking jobs, committing crime, being a burden on public resources, and rejecting the dominant culture. Researchers have shown, moreover, that blame facilitates aggression by focusing attention on a target and triggering anger. The purpose of this paper is to explicate and test a theory of why immigrants are blamed. There are two hypotheses. The first hypothesis argues that blame is rooted in threats to native entitlement. In other words, natives blame immigrants when the intergroup distribution of resources is incongruent with the distribution that is believed to be normatively desirable. The second hypothesis proposes that these contextually-shaped threats moderate the effects of individual differences; perceptions of threat will have a particularly pronounced effect on blame for individuals who subscribe to authoritarian values. These hypotheses are tested using survey data gathered in an urban slum in South Africa, where widespread violence against immigrants occurred in 2008 and where tensions remain. Analysis of the survey data supports both hypotheses.

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THE world over, immigrants are accused of taking jobs, committing crime, being a burden on public resources, rejecting the dominant culture, and other sins (e.g. Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2009). They are, in other words, blamed by natives. This paper examines why.

Numerous researchers have investigated the etiology of prejudice against immigrants, opposition to immigration, and support for anti-immigrant parties (Brader, Valentino and Suhay 2008; Citrin et al. 1997; Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; Quillian 1995; Mughan and Paxton 2006; Sides and Citrin 2007; Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004). But none have yet examined why immigrants and other outgroups are blamed.

These attitudes toward immigrants and immigration are no doubt related, but it is important to consider blame separately. Blame of a particular outgroup focuses attention on a target group (Javeline 2003*b*), which serves to coordinate animosity and reprisals against that group. Blame of an outgroup also produces intergroup anger (Betancourt and Blair 1992; Claassen 2013), which increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior (Lerner and Keltner 2001; Mackie, Devos and Smith 2000). Unsurprisingly then, blame of outgroups is linked to prejudice (Banks and Valentino 2012), support for aggressive or exclusionary policies (Halperin 2008), and even the likelihood of participation in intergroup violence (Claassen 2013). Being implicated in numerous forms of intergroup aggression, there is arguably no more important intergroup attitude than blame.

Despite these psychological, behavioral, and political consequences, there is little research focused explicitly on why people blame immigrants and other minority groups. The major contribution of this paper is to propose and test a theory explaining why immigrants are blamed. I propose two related hypotheses: the first rooted in perceptions of situations; the second, individual differences.

The first hypothesis argues that blame is a response to a perceived threat to the welfare and status that natives believe is their due, or *threats to native entitlement*. This hypothesis springs from the work of scholars such as Blumer (1958) and Horowitz (1985), who argue that intergroup conflict is rooted in beliefs about the resources and privileges that are thought to be deserved by the in- and outgroups. People, they argue, care not just about the distribution of resources between groups, but also the distribution that they believe ought to exist. When natives believe that immigrants have violated their entitlements—either because they have risen above their rank and accessed resources that do not “belong” to them, or because the ingroup are receiving less than they deserve—they feel threatened by the outgroup and attribute blame.

The second hypothesis proposes that these normative threats moderate the effects of individual psychological predispositions. A growing body of research shows that situational threats interact with *authoritarian predispositions* (Feldman and Stenner 1997; Lavine et al. 2002). Authoritarians exposed to threats exhibit motivated reasoning and close-mindedness (Lavine, Lodge and Freitas 2005). These patterns of cognition produce a predilection for simple explanations for harms suffered by one’s ingroup, such as blaming an outgroup. I thus argue that perceptions that the outgroup have violated their entitlements will increase outgroup blame for all ingroup members, but this tendency will be particularly pronounced for those who already hold authoritarian values.

I test these hypotheses using data from a novel survey conducted in an urban slum in South Africa. There are at least two advantages to conducting research on immigrants in this context. First, while immigrants in lower or middle-income countries, such as South Africa, face the same challenges of prejudice, marginalization, and state repression as their counterparts in wealthy countries, they are additionally more likely to encounter violence from other citizens. Indeed, the backdrop to my survey is the wave of anti-immigrant violence that swept South African cities in 2008, leaving 62 people dead

and 100,000 displaced (Misago et al. 2010). Second, the vast majority of existing studies on attitudes to immigrants are situated in developed-country settings such as the United States or Europe. Yet more than half of migration flows occur in the developing world (Castles and Miller 2003). An additional contribution of this research is thus to examine attitudes to immigrants outside of the traditional Western context.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I explicate the concept of outgroup blame and describe its political implications. The theory, and its two attendant hypotheses, are then developed in more detail in the second section. Third, I explore the context and nature of anti-immigrant blame in South Africa, before, fourth, describing the methods used to gather data and measure the key variables. The results of the data analysis are then presented in the fifth section. The evidence supports both hypotheses. The final section offers a more widely-ranging discussion of the findings and some concluding thoughts.

The Concept of Outgroup Blame

The social world is complex and confusing. We try to make sense of this world by attributing causation to events and actors (Heider 1958). Such causal attribution, while necessary for blame, is not, however, sufficient. Philosophers note that blame additionally entails a normative judgement that the responsible party has acted unfairly in some way; they are at fault, or are culpable (e.g. Coates and Tognazzini 2013). These normative considerations are also important in psychological conceptions of blame. Shaver (1985), for example, argues that blame requires attributions of causation, responsibility (knowingly having caused a harm), blameworthiness (having acted without justification). Ferguson and Rule (1983) suggest a four-step process involving inferences of causality, avoidability, intentionality, and motive acceptability.

At a minimum, there are thus two components of blame. First, individuals attribute blame to some actor who is believed to have committed a harm. Second, blame is a normative judgement: it is steeped in expectations of what the blamed party ought to have done. This normative component means that blame is necessarily directed at a conscious actor—a person—rather than an inanimate actor or event. This definition can also be extended to intergroup settings: outgroup blame is an attribution that some other social group caused a harm, and acted unfairly in doing so.

Blame affects political behavior through cognitive and emotional mechanisms. A useful analogy is with a magnifying glass. On the one hand, blame produces a beam of concentrated light: the cognitive consequence of blame is to focus attention on some target (Javeline 2003*b*). On the other hand, blame produces heat: it is closely related to the emotion of anger (Betancourt and Blair 1992), and anger increases the desire for confrontation and the perceived risks of aggression (Lerner and Keltner 2001; Huddy et al. 2005). The cognitive focus of blame thus identifies a target and permits coordinated action, while the hot, emotional nature of blame encourages punishment of this target.

It is little surprise, then, that politicians who are blamed for national problems are punished at the voting booth (Marsh and Tilley 2010). However, the political consequences of blame extend beyond individual attitudes and behavior. Banks and Valentino (2012), for example, find that symbolic racism is rooted in blame of black Americans. Halperin (2008) shows that Israelis who blame Palestinians are more likely to express anger, hatred, and support for exclusionary and aggressive policies. In one of the most important studies, Debra Javeline (2003*b*; 2003*a*) shows that blame of political actors facilitates confrontational collective action: Russians who blamed incumbent politicians for the wage arrears crisis of 1998 were more likely to take part in public protests. And Claassen (2013) shows that outgroup blame increases willingness to take part in intergroup violence, both directly, as well as indirectly, by triggering

intergroup anger.

Intergroup blame, in short, is an evaluation that has important psychological and political consequences. The next section proposes a theory explaining why one group blames another.

The Roots of Blame

Blame is, in part, an inference about the social world. If an individual blames immigrants for taking jobs from her ingroup, an obvious reason for this judgement is that she has observed members of her group losing their jobs to immigrants. While this explanation has the benefit of simplicity, it does not appear to comport with reality. Many of those who blame immigrants for taking jobs have no evidence to justify such beliefs. A 2006 South African survey, for example, found that, although 62% of respondents agreed that immigrants took jobs, far fewer respondents (31%) stated that someone they knew had lost a job to an immigrant, and only 15% reported having lost their own job in such a fashion (Southern African Migration Project 2008). Other allegations of blame that are leveled at immigrants are based on behaviors, such as criminal acts, that are even less readily observable. Few people actually witness any significant number of crimes taking place. Moreover, in country after country, we see the same constellation of allegations against immigrants: they take jobs, they use public resources, they commit crime, lack respect for local customs, traditions, and locals themselves.¹

Blame is, however, not only a causal attribution, but also a judgment of culpability or wrongdoing. Blaming immigrants for taking jobs or committing crime is not just an inference about what this outgroup has done, but is also a judgment about how this outgroup ought to behave. We should thus expect that blame of an outgroup does not simply arise from the evidence of the eyes, but is instead the result of more deeply-rooted psychological processes.²

Perhaps the most prominent candidates for psychological processes that could plausibly underpin blame of immigrants are offered by theories of “realistic group conflict” (Campbell 1965; Dancygier 2010; Olzak 1992) and “power-threat” (Blalock 1967; Giles and Evans 1986; Green, Strolovitch and Wong 1998). Both claim that intergroup animosity is a function of competition between groups. Realistic group conflict theorists focus on competition over scarce material resources; power-threat theorists, competition over political power. Either sort of competition has been linked with intergroup tensions, prejudice, conflict, and violence. By extension, either could serve as an explanation for blame of immigrants.

These theories focus on the resources, wealth, and power enjoyed two groups—“who gets what,” in other words. Considerations of the actual distributions of such endowments between an ingroup and an outgroup may well play a role in triggering blame. But blame also has a normative component—the outgroup has violated expectations of what ought to be. A fuller understanding of why the outgroup is blame would thus seem to also require a commensurate evaluation that this group has committed a

¹On blame of immigrants in the United States, see Espenshade and Hempstead (1996); in the Netherlands, see Sniderman and Hagendoorn (2009); in South Africa, Misago et al. (2010).

²Indeed, Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior (2004) conduct an interesting experiment that verifies this claim. Respondents are randomly assigned to one of two conditions: the first set of respondents are asked either if they find some named outgroup threatening to their safety, economic well-being, and cultural values; the second set are asked if they feel these threats in general, without naming any outgroup. Respondents in the former condition reveal threat perceptions that have higher correlations than in the latter condition. Since both considerations ask respondents to report their evaluations of facts about the world, but only the former mentions an outgroup, this experiment indicates that bringing an outgroup into the equation brings more deeply-rooted intergroup considerations to bear on judgements such as blame attributions.

normative violation. I thus propose that the roots of anti-immigrant blame lie in normative threats to natives' status and welfare, which I refer to as threats to native entitlement.

Threats to Native Entitlement

Realistic group conflict and power-threat theories rest on evaluations of the actual distributions of various resources between groups. I refer to such evaluations as *group endowments*. Native individuals may thus hold separate evaluations about the endowments enjoyed by their ingroup as well as the immigrant outgroup.

In addition to group endowments, some authors argue that we also evaluate the level of symbolic and material resources that each group in a society deserves.³ This concept of *group entitlement* is first distinguished by Horowitz (1985), although a similar idea is offered by Blumer (1958) in the form of "group position." While group endowments are evaluations of who gets what, group entitlements are beliefs about who deserves what.

There are four separate evaluations at play here. A native individual may form appraisals about the endowments enjoyed by her ingroup and some immigrant outgroup; she may also hold beliefs about the entitlements deserved by each of these two groups.

The four components of group entitlement and group endowment can be combined in different ways. The difference between ingroup and outgroup endowments, for example, produces a measure of perceived intergroup inequality, while the difference between ingroup and outgroup endowments results in the level of inequality that is thought to be deserved. The gap between ingroup endowment and entitlement indicates the extent to which natives are falling short of their deserved position, while a similar gap between outgroup endowment and entitlement tells us the degree to which immigrants are thought to be exceeding their deserved positions.

Natives' entitlements become threatened when the actual intergroup distribution of resources is incongruent with that thought to be normatively desirable. It is convenient to think of this concept as the degree to which an individual desires the actual intergroup distribution of resources to become more (or less) unequal so as to arrive at the intergroup distribution of resources that she regards as normatively desirable. There are thus two distinct pathways to such threats. First, when immigrants are believed to have "risen above their rank" and exceeded their entitlements; and second, when the native endowments fall short of the more lofty position that they believe they deserve. This yields the first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *Perceived threats to native entitlement produces blame of immigrants.*

The interplay between perceived group entitlements and group endowments is a useful framework for explaining variations in intergroup blame because it permits blame to be linked to intergroup distributional contexts and shared historical and cultural experiences. Perceptions of group endowments, on the one hand, are contextual evaluations, which are likely to be shaped by empirical evidence regarding which group gets jobs, housing, or whatever resources are most in contention. Perceptions of group entitlement, on the other hand, are beliefs about who ought to get what. These beliefs would appear to be a function of shared discourses and historical experiences (Blumer 1958). Immigrants are particularly likely to be regarded as deserving little, given that international norms and laws restrict the rights

³There is evidence that both material resources (such as jobs, housing, and money) and symbolic resources (such as group status and respect) matter for intergroup conflict. On symbolic, see Sears, Hensler and Speer (1979) and Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior (2004); on material, see Bobo (1983) and Olzak (1992).

of immigrants in all settings.⁴

Threat-Authoritarianism Interactions

While the first hypothesis posits a direct effect of threats to native entitlement on blame, a second hypothesis suggests that threat plays an additional, indirect role: it moderates the effect of authoritarian predispositions on blame. Authoritarianism has long been linked with intolerance of, prejudice toward, and support for aggression against other groups (Adorno et al. 1950). Political psychologists are increasingly emphasizing the importance of situational triggers in activating psychological predispositions such as authoritarianism, particularly in intergroup situations (e.g. Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004). Indeed, Feldman and Stenner (1997) argue that authoritarian dispositions are in fact activated by threatening contexts. It is the interplay between situational threats and authoritarian predispositions, rather than authoritarianism alone, which produces antipathy to outgroups (Gibson and Howard 2007).

This threat-authoritarian dynamic appears likely to result in increased blame of outgroups. Authoritarianism has long been linked with social conformity and a disapproval of difference (Feldman and Stenner 1997). The interplay of these threat and authoritarianism moreover produces a pattern of cognition can be described as self-deception. Lavine et al. (2002) and Lavine, Lodge and Freitas (2005), for example, show that authoritarians who are exposed to threats engage in motivated reasoning, exhibit close-mindedness, and search for information that confirms their existing beliefs. Given the stereotypical and superficial nature of much blame of immigrants,⁵ attributing blame to immigrants appears particularly likely if individuals engage in motivated reasoning.

There are numerous sources of threat that might turn authoritarianism predispositions into blame of outgroups. One might think that threats to personal well-being and status—for example, being unemployed, poor, or of low socio-economic status—would be sufficient. Feldman, however convincingly conceives of authoritarianism as a fundamental orientation balancing two competing desiderata: individual autonomy and group order (Feldman and Stenner 1997; Feldman 2003). Two implications follow. First, authoritarianism is a value dimension: it is concerned with the way things ought to be. As such, normative threats, rather than threats to immediate material circumstances, should be more important in activating authoritarian predispositions. And second, it is normative threats to the group, not to the individual that shifts the balance on the individual autonomy versus group order trade-off toward the latter.

Threats to native entitlement are one kind of normative threat to an ingroup. It thus seems likely that these threats will activate authoritarian values in the manner described by Feldman. The second hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 2. *Threats to native entitlement moderate the effect of authoritarianism on blame of immigrants; when threat is high, authoritarianism will increase blame; when threat is low, authoritarianism will have no effect on blame.*

⁴For example, even in tolerant Scandinavia, immigrants may vote in local but not national elections (Togeby 1999).

⁵Immigrants are blamed for the same harms in very different contexts. They are also blamed for harms that are somewhat inconsistent: taking jobs, on the one hand, but being a drain on resources, or committing crime on the other.

Anti-Immigrant Blame in South Africa

This paper investigates the roots of anti-immigrant blame in a South African context. South Africa is perhaps best known for the conflict between white and black (e.g. Gibson 2004). Less well-known is the antipathy to immigrants that is harbored by citizens of all races. Indeed, data from the 1995 World Values Survey show that South Africans are the most xenophobic nation of any included in the sample (Mattes et al. 1999). A 2006 survey by the Southern African Migration Project moreover finds that almost half of the South African sample want foreign nationals, regardless of their legal status, to be deported (Southern African Migration Project 2008). This results of this same survey show that antipathy to immigrants is not restricted to certain South African in-groups, or certain national outgroups: the proportion of the sample holding a favorable view of immigrants does not exceed 26%, whether the sample is restricted to blacks or whites, or whether respondents are queried about immigrants from Africa, Europe, or North America.⁶

Given such high levels of xenophobia, it is not surprising that South Africans readily blame immigrants for the usual transgressions—committing crime, taking jobs, and so on. A 1999 survey by the Southern African Migration Project finds that 59%, 52%, and 45% of South Africans agree that foreign nationals “use up resources,” “take jobs,” and “commit crime,” respectively (Southern African Migration Project 2008). These already high levels of blame intensify by the next wave of the survey, with the respective proportions agreeing with each of these items rising to 67%, 62%, and 67% in 2006 (Southern African Migration Project 2008). While these survey responses are based on close-ended items, researchers using open-ended interviews arrive at similar conclusions. Misago et al. (2010) find that residents of nine South African townships⁷ blame immigrants for illegally acquiring government housing, taking jobs, committing crime, and undermining (i.e., outcompeting) local businesses.

These high levels of anti-immigrant blame suggest that South Africa is of interest as a site to conduct research on blame. As mentioned, a second reason for collecting data on anti-immigrant attitudes in South Africa is that the vast majority of research in this area is set in developed countries, although more than half of the flows of migrants are now within the developing world (Castles and Miller 2003). However, there is yet another reason why South Africa is a propitious location for such research: the xenophobia and blame expressed by its citizens are frequently accompanied by violence against immigrants (Harris 2004). Blame of immigrants, in other words, has marked political and social consequences in South Africa.

Indeed, in May 2008, one incident of anti-immigrant mob violence spiraled into a series of ethnic riots, which spread across townships and slums throughout the country. The targets were immigrants who lived in the affected townships. Zimbabwean and Mozambicans, being the most prevalent immigrants in South Africa,⁸ were particularly well-represented among the victims (UN News Service 2008).

⁶By way of comparison, 46% of white South Africans have a favorable view of black South Africans, and 57% of blacks, a favorable view of whites.

⁷Township has two meanings in South Africa. The first meaning is technical, is used in town-planning, and refers to a unit of area. The second meaning is popular, and refers to a residential area that was reserved for non-whites under South Africa's apartheid policy. Although townships may contain shacks or even entire informal settlements, many also have areas of formal houses that resemble suburbs in many respects. Despite the demise of apartheid, the term is in widespread use in South Africa.

⁸There are no reliable figures on the extent of undocumented immigration to South Africa, but estimates vary from 500,000 to 12 million (Waller 2006). One of the more sophisticated studies concludes that around 500,000 foreign nationals reside in the city of Johannesburg alone (Center for Development and Enterprise 2008).

After three weeks of attacks, looting, and destruction of property, the death toll had reached 62, with 670 wounded and 100,000 people displaced (Misago et al. 2010).

Methods

The survey was conducted in the township where the 2008 violence began, Alexandra, in Johannesburg. The fieldwork took place in April and May 2011. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with a representative sample of 497 residents of Alexandra. The sample was selected using satellite photographs and a stratified, cluster sampling design. The response rate (AAPOR #3) is 69.2% (further details are available in the online appendix).

Measuring Blame

Outgroup blame requires both an attribution that some other group is responsible for a harm to the ingroup, but also a judgement that this group have behaved in an illegitimate fashion (Ferguson and Rule 1983; Shaver 1985). I thus measured two scales: one asking respondents whether they attribute responsibility to foreigners for various harms suffered by their group; the other, whether respondents regard various harms as unfair.

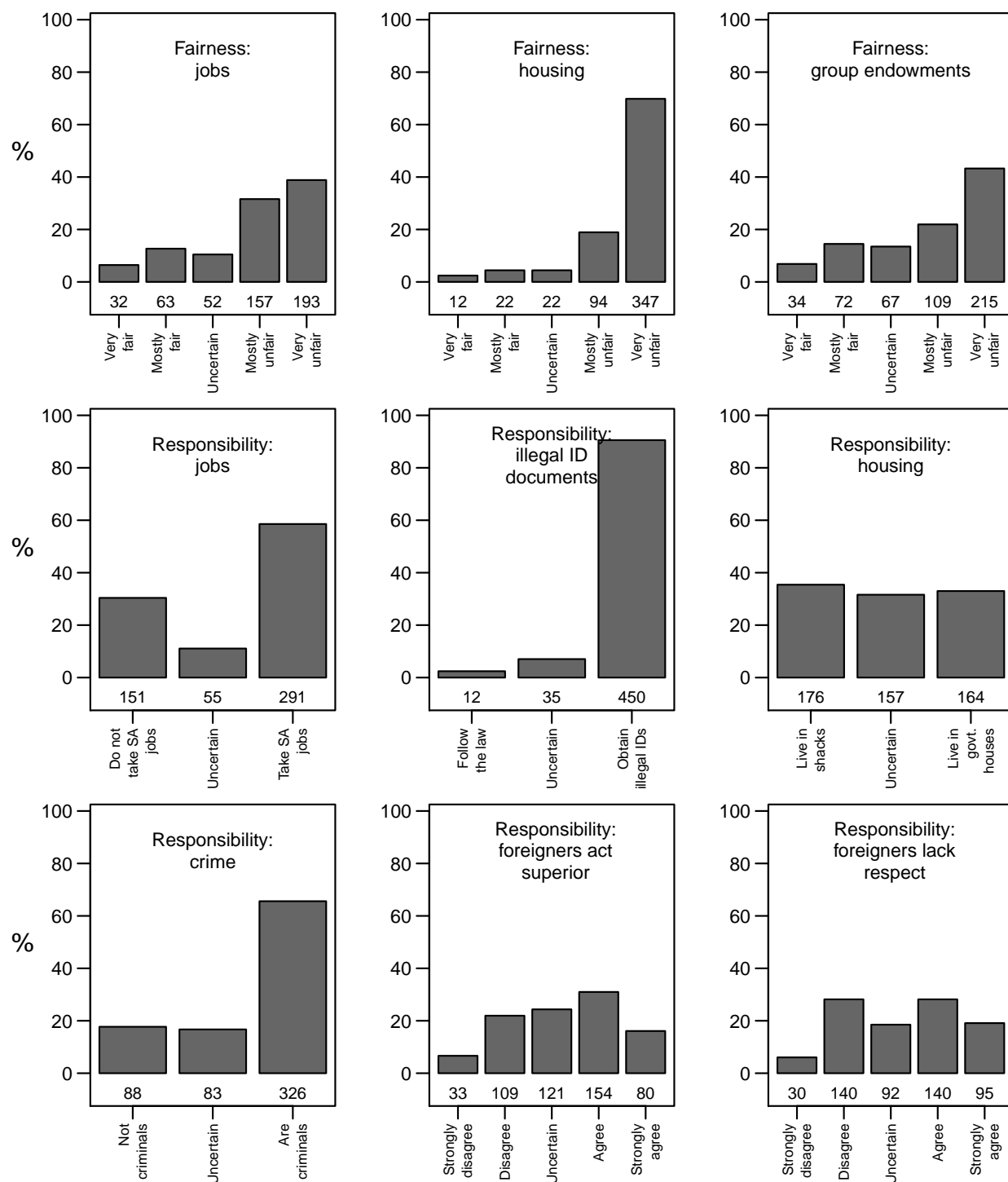
Responsibility and unfairness were contextualized using sources of harm that are realistic and meaningful to Alexandra residents. Questions measuring attributions of responsibility were posed in the contexts of five harms. Respondents were asked whether foreigners take locals' jobs and housing, engage in criminal activity, and illegally obtain South African identification documents. In addition to these largely material concerns, respondents were also asked whether they blamed foreigners for the symbolic harms of acting superior to, or disrespecting locals.⁹ Unfairness was then measured at three different points in the survey, after short vignettes about foreigners working in Johannesburg and living in government houses in Alexandra, and again after the intergroup endowment and entitlement comparisons.

The response distributions for these responsibility and fairness items are presented in Figure 1. Majorities blame foreigners for taking jobs from South Africans (59%), committing crime (66%), and illegally obtaining South African identity documents (90%).¹⁰ Only around a third, however, believe that foreigners compete with South Africans for government housing. Slightly less than half the respondents agreed that immigrants “lack respect” and “act superior.” Most respondents furthermore found the situations posed to them in the survey—foreigners working in Johannesburg, living in government houses, and ingroup-outgroup endowment comparisons—to be quite unfair: 90%, for example thought it “unfair” or “very unfair” for foreigners to live in government houses. Perhaps more surprisingly, given the previous anti-immigrant violence in Alexandra, is that 17% of the sample viewed foreigners working in Johannesburg as “fair” or “very fair.” These descriptive results confirm existing research from South Africa by showing that immigrants are held responsible for taking jobs from locals and committing crimes. They also show that immigrants are widely believed to acquire identity documents through illegitimate means, as well as lack respect for natives. And although there is not a large constituency of

⁹See the online appendix for exact wording of all items.

¹⁰Whenever possible, “don't know” responses were recoded to some intermediate response category. Missing values were handled using multiple imputation. Further details are reported in the supplementary online appendix.

Figure 1. Distribution of Responses for Blame Items



The grey bars indicate the percentage of respondents who chose each response category, across each of the nine outgroup blame survey items; the numbers below each bar show the weighted number of respondents choosing each category. Total $N = 497$.

natives who are prepared to vigorously defend the rights of immigrants, there is some variation in levels of outgroup blame.

Both the attributions of responsibility and unfairness form reliable scales (Cronbach's alpha = .75 and .75, respectively). These two variables are then measured using two separate item-response models.¹¹ Given that attributions of responsibility and unfairness are both necessary components of blame, the final variable of outgroup blame is calculated as the product of these two components.¹² Individual with high scores on this variable thus both attribute responsibility to the outgroup for harms suffered by their ingroup, and regard this outgroup behavior as unfair.

Measuring Threats to Native Entitlement

The overall level of perceived threat to natives' entitlements is calculated using four separate items, which asked respondents to evaluate the entitlements and endowments enjoyed by both natives and immigrants. Respondents were shown a diagram of a ladder with seven rungs. This was described as representing the position that a group held in society and the respect that a group received from others. Higher rungs thus implied a higher level of group endowment or entitlement.

The distributions of responses for each of these items are displayed in Figure 2. The items referring to the endowments and entitlements of natives are on the left (plots 1 and 2), while the items referring to immigrants on the right (plots 3 and 4). Respondents tend to place natives slightly below the midpoint of scale when it comes to actual position or endowments (mean = 2.3). The outgroup are appraised as only slightly higher on the scale (mean = 2.9), and still in a middling position overall.¹³

The situation is markedly different when comparing ingroup and outgroup entitlements (plots 2 and 4). Residents of Alexandra believe that locals deserve a high position—a majority choose the top two rungs of the ladder (mean = 4.8). In contrast, they feel that foreigners are not entitled to very much at all—a majority choose the lowest two rungs on the ladder for this item (mean = 1.4). This figure thus shows that while the sample do not perceive much inequality in Alexandra, they believe that there should be inequality, with locals on top.

Measuring Other Variables

Following Feldman (2003), *authoritarianism* is conceived as a set of beliefs lying on a social conformity versus individual freedom dimension. The concept is measured using two forced choice items adapted from Feldman's battery: respondents were asked whether (1) freedom allows people to reach their potential or produces disorder; and (2) whether people should be guided by their feelings or by the rules.¹⁴

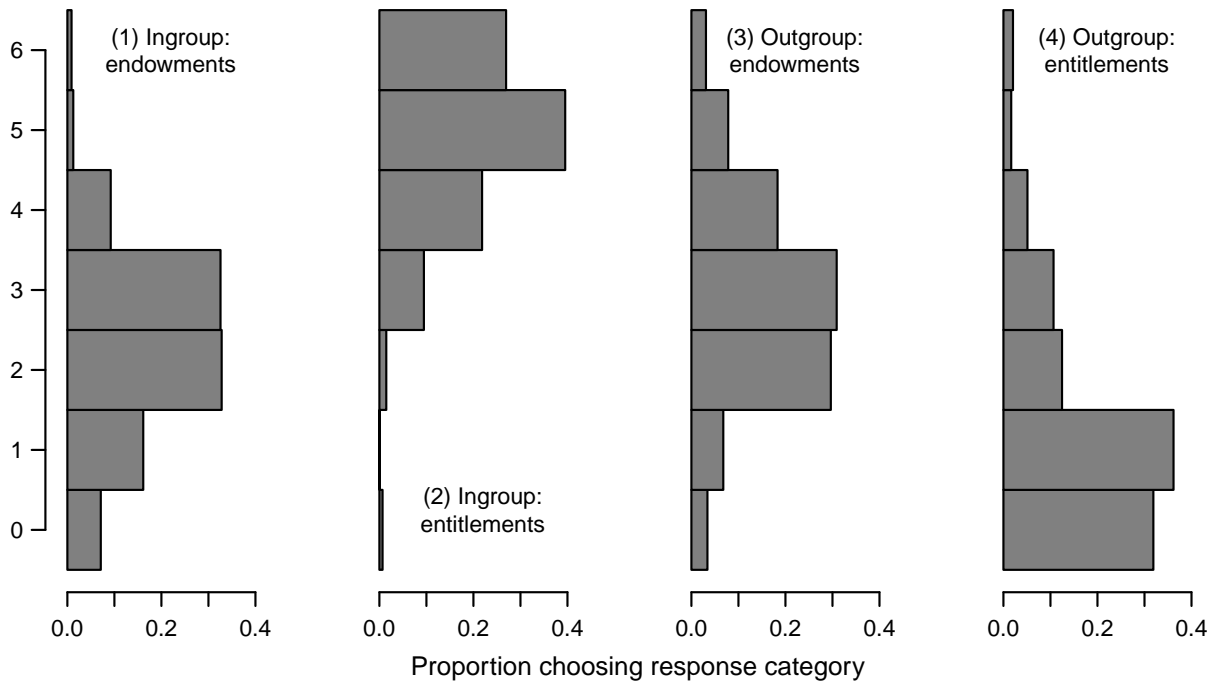
¹¹The parameter estimates are available in the online appendix. To permit model identification, unfairness is estimated using a graded response model with item discrimination parameters constrained to be equal. A factor analysis of the polychoric correlation matrix shows, however, that these three items all load highly on the first factor (housing: .66; jobs: .79; entitlement: .66). The graded response model for attributions of responsibility allows all discrimination parameters to vary. Goodness-of-fit tests for both models show that we cannot reject the null hypotheses of both models fitting the data (attributions of responsibility: $\chi^2 = 12.16$, d.f. = 9, $p = .20$; unfairness: $\chi^2 = 3.15$, d.f. = 2, $p = .21$).

¹²Note that the two components have a correlation of .57.

¹³These relative positions are consistent with research that describes immigrants in South African townships as slightly more likely to be employed or self-employed than locals, but by no means well-off (Center for Development and Enterprise 2008).

¹⁴Thirty-nine percent of respondents chose the authoritarian option for the first question, freedom produces disorder; 82% chose the authoritarian option for the second, that people should be guided by the rules. Respondents were also presented

Figure 2. Distribution of Responses: Group Endowment and Group Entitlement



Each plot displays the distribution of responses for each of the four seven-point indicators used to construct the measure of threat to native entitlement. The highest value, here six is described to respondents as representing a high social position, with zero being low. $N = 497$.

An additive scale was calculated from these two items.¹⁵

A number of additional variables are measured and included as controls. First, exposure to *horizontal influence* from peers and friends. Numerous researchers have found that people's attitudes and perceptions are affected by those around them (Turner 1991), particularly within their discussion networks (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987). Horizontal influence is measured by adding the responses for three items, which asked respondents how often they had heard other people blaming foreigners (1) for taking jobs; (2) taking houses meant for South Africans; and (3) acting superior to locals.

Second, a number of authors argue that leaders can shape the extent to which their followers blame some outgroup. Historians, for example, argue that the Nazi party was able to convince Germans that Jews were to blame for their woes (e.g. Staub 1989). This *vertical influence* is measured using three items asking respondents if they had heard leaders blaming immigrants for (1) for taking jobs; (2) taking houses meant for South Africans; and (3) acting superior to locals.

Third, measures of exposure to resource competition with immigrants are also included. Existing research (Steinberg 2008; Misago et al. 2010) suggests that competition over jobs and public housing might stoke intergroup tensions in Alexandria. Locals who are *unemployed* or *live in low quality housing* are particularly likely to compete with foreigners for access to these resources. Two corresponding

with an intermediate response option of uncertain or ambiguous.

¹⁵The reliability is weak but adequate for a two-item scale: Cronbach's alpha = .62.

indicators are used in the subsequent analysis.

Fourth, frustration-aggression theory suggests that aversive experiences or conditions produces frustration, which leads to aggression (Dollard et al. 1939). Aggression may also be displaced on to some other target, such as an outgroup (Berkowitz 1989). *Poverty* is used as a measure of a sustained aversive experience that may produce displaced blame. Poverty is measured by asking respondents which consumer goods, from a list of six, are owned by their household.

Fifth, various authors have shown that the degree of group identity increases the depth of outgroup animosity, whether because of cultural threat (Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004) or power threat (Giles and Evans 1986). *Strength of national identity* is thus measured and included. Three items were asked: the importance of the South African identity to the respondent, how different the respondent felt to other South Africans, and whether respondent would take an insult directed against their group personally.

Finally, respondent's *level of education, party support, age, years lived in Alexandra, and gender* are also used as control variables.

Results

As a first examination of the first hypothesis—the effect of threat on blame—consider the bivariate relationship between these variables, presented in Figure 3. The level of anti-immigrant blame is plotted by each reported level of the threat to natives' entitlement variable, retaining the units of the original ladder scale.¹⁶ A clear increase in blame can be seen as threat increases. Respondents who report low or negative threat to their group entitlements attribute little blame to immigrants; when threat is low—one or lower on the ladder scale—the level of blame remains below the first quartile of the distribution for this variable. When threat to group entitlements increases to five, however, the level of anti-immigrant blame reaches the third quartile of the distribution. There is thus a robust association between greater perceptions of threat and greater attributions of blame.

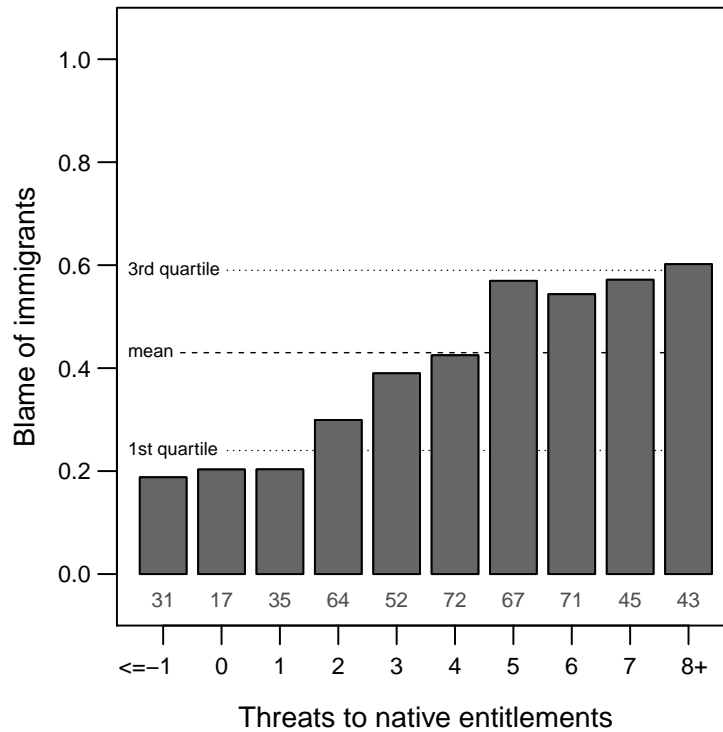
To estimate the causal effects of threats to native entitlement on attributions of outgroup blame, I move to a multiple regression framework, with additional variables included to controls for possible confounding factors. Fixed effects for community policing sector and interview language are also included to control for the characteristics of informal leaders, who operate within each sector, and to reduce the effects of correlated measurement error induced by the language of interview. Given that the data were gathered using a complex survey design, parameter estimates are obtained with survey linear regression (Lumley 2010), which takes account of the unequal probabilities of selection into the sample and the additional uncertainty generated by cluster sampling.

The results of two survey regression models of outgroup blame are shown in Table 1. The first model, 1.1, reports the main effect of threats to natives' entitlements. This tests the first hypothesis. Model 1.2 then tests the second hypothesis by adding an interaction term between threats to ingroup entitlement and authoritarianism.

Threats to native entitlement exhibits a strong, positive association with blame (the standardized regression effect is .52). The effect holds despite controlling for horizontal and vertical influence, exposure to material competition with immigrants, poverty, and education, among other variables. This evidence

¹⁶Using these units, the measure of threats to native entitlement has a possible range of -12 to 12 ; the categories below zero and greater than eight and sparsely populated however. These are collapsed in the figure.

Figure 3. Bivariate Relationship Between Threat and Blame



The vertical bars display the average level of anti-immigrant blame by level of perceived threat to native entitlements. Blame is on the vertical axis; the horizontal axis is scaled according to the seven-point ladder scale that was used to collect the endowment and entitlement measures. The numbers below each bar show the weighted sample size within each level of threat. The dashed horizontal line shows the weighted mean level of anti-immigrant blame; the dotted lines indicate the interquartile range. Total $N = 497$.

from Alexandra thus supports the first hypothesis: blame of immigrants is a reaction to perceived threats to native entitlement.

The second hypothesis postulates a conditional relationship between threat to the ingroup and authoritarianism. This claim is based on research which shows that authoritarian predispositions are activated by threats, resulting in an intolerant and aggressive pattern of cognition and behavior (Feldman and Stenner 1997). I test this hypothesis by including an interaction term between threats to natives' entitlements and authoritarianism in Model 1.2. The effect is positive and significant, showing that the effect of authoritarianism on blame is greater when threat is high than when it is low.

The theory of the authoritarian-threat dynamic proposes a more specific pattern of interaction than merely a positive interaction however: it argues that high levels of threat to the ingroup activate authoritarian values. The implication is that at low levels of threat, authoritarians do not differ significantly from non-authoritarians in their political attitudes (such as outgroup blame); only when threat is higher does a difference between these two types emerge. To test this more specific set of hypotheses, we need to examine the marginal effects of the interaction terms. The theory is supported to the extent that the marginal effect of authoritarianism is approximately zero when threat is low, and significantly positive when threat is high.

Table 1. Regression Models of Blame

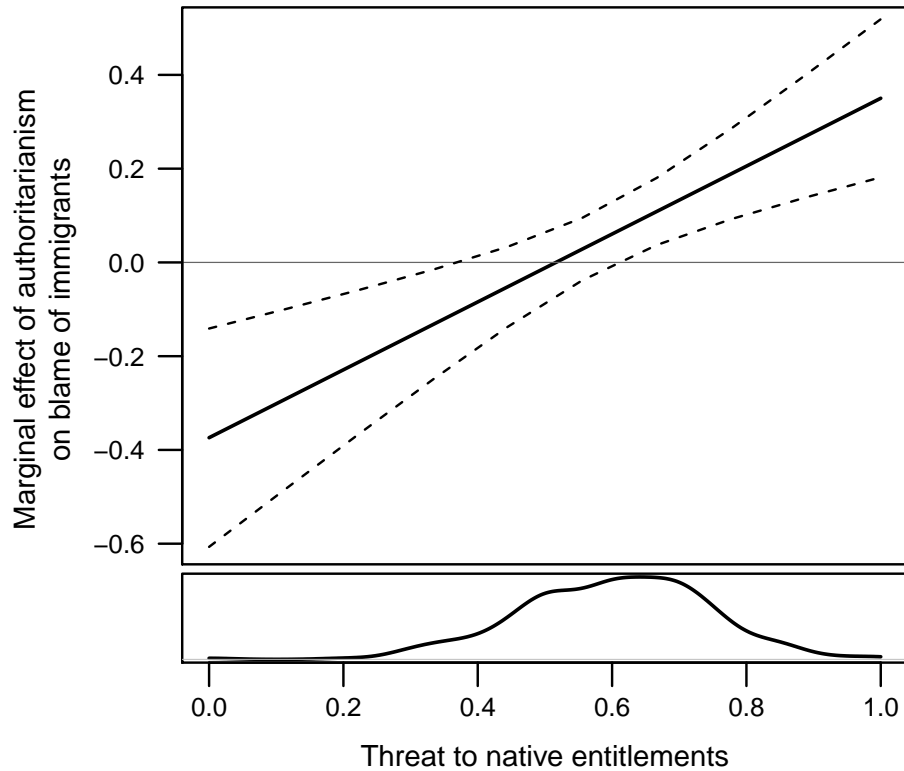
Explanatory Variable	Outcome Variable: Blame of Immigrants			
	1.1		1.2	
Threat to native entitlements	.95***	(.07)	.51***	(.13)
Authoritarianism	.08*	(.03)	-.37**	(.12)
Authoritarianism × threat to native entitlements			.72***	(.19)
Horizontal influence	.17***	(.04)	.18***	(.04)
Vertical influence	-.02	(.05)	-.02	(.05)
Meetings attended	.08	(.06)	.08	(.06)
Employment: not in the labor force	.00	(.04)	-.01	(.04)
Employment: unemployed	-.01	(.02)	-.02	(.02)
Lives in low quality housing	-.01	(.02)	-.02	(.02)
Poverty	.13*	(.06)	.13*	(.06)
Strength of national identity	.08	(.05)	.06	(.05)
Party support: none	.01	(.02)	.00	(.02)
Party support: opposition	.00	(.04)	-.01	(.04)
Age	-.16	(.09)	-.15	(.09)
Proportion of life spent in Alexandria	.25**	(.09)	.23**	(.08)
Gender: Male	.04*	(.02)	.04*	(.02)
Education	-.06	(.05)	-.05	(.05)
Adjusted R^2	.47		.47	

All models include an intercept and indicators for community policing sectors and language of interview. Models estimated using pseudo-maximum likelihood. Design-based standard errors are shown in parentheses. All variables are scaled from 0 to 1. $N = 497$. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

The marginal effects of the interaction terms are displayed graphically in Figure 4. The solid line shows the regression effect of authoritarianism on blame, across the observed levels of group entitlement violations. The figure shows that at the lowest observed levels of threat, authoritarianism has a negative effect on blame. Because there are few observations at the extremes of the group entitlement violation scale, it is preferable to only consider the marginal effects of authoritarianism across the interquartile range of group entitlement violations—from .5 to .7. At the lower quartile, the effect of authoritarianism is not significantly different than zero; at the upper quartile, it is significantly greater than zero. Thus, as hypothesized, at low levels of threat, authoritarianism has no effect on blame, while at higher levels, it has a positive effect.

As discussed earlier, the concept of threats to native entitlement is based on a comparison of four basic evaluations of in- and outgroups: the level of endowments enjoyed by both groups, and the entitlement deserved by both groups. It is possible that blame is triggered primarily by one or two of these components, either individually or in tandem. A native individual, for example, might perceive a threat to her entitled position because her group are as well off as she would like. Alternatively, perhaps the immigrant outgroup are exceeding their deserved level of status and welfare. Or it might be the gap

Figure 4. Marginal Effects of Authoritarianism on Blame by Threats



The top plot displays the marginal effects of authoritarianism on blame (vertical axis) by perceived threats to native entitlements (horizontal axis). The smaller, bottom plot shows the distribution of this latter variable. All covariates from Model 1.1 are included.

between the resources enjoyed by native and immigrants groups that produces threat. The next step in the data analysis is thus to disaggregate the measure of threats to natives' entitlement and consider the separate role that each component plays in shaping attributions that immigrants are to blame.

Table 2 reports the results of three regression models featuring disaggregations of the threats to native entitlement as explanatory variables, along with the set of control variables included in Table 1. Model 2.1 breaks the threat to native entitlement variable along the ingroup-outgroup axis. Two measures are produced and used as explanatory variables: the degree to which natives are seen as falling short of their entitlements (labelled $\text{IndEnt} - \text{IndEnd}$), and the degree to which immigrants are seen as exceeding their entitlements ($\text{OutEnt} - \text{OutEnd}$). The results show that blame is, in larger part, due to perceptions of outgroup endowment and entitlement than ingroup. While both show positive and significant associations with blame, the effect of outgroup violations of entitlement is especially strong.¹⁷ The extent to which the outgroup are believed to have exceeded their entitlement thus matters more for blame than the extent to which the ingroup are getting less than they deserve.

Model 2.2 then disaggregates threat along the entitlement-endowment dimension, producing two additional measures: the perceived level of intergroup inequality ($\text{OutEnt} - \text{InEnt}$), and the level

¹⁷The standardized coefficient for outgroup violations of entitlement is .44; for the ingroup measure, it is .17.

Table 2. Regression Models of Blame, With Disaggregated Threats to Natives' Entitlement

	Outcome Variable: Blame of Immigrants		
	2.1	2.2	2.3
Natives falling short of entitlements (InEnt – InEnd)	.32*** (.08)		
Immigrants exceeding entitlements (OutEnd – OutEnt)	.60*** (.05)		
Perceived intergroup inequality (OutEnt – InEnt)		.54*** (.07)	
Deserved intergroup inequality (InEnd – OutEnd)		.59*** (.07)	
Natives' endowments (InEnt)			–.27*** (.06)
Natives' entitlements (InEnt)			.09 (.08)
Immigrants' endowments (OutEnd)			.26*** (.04)
Immigrants' entitlements (OutEnt)			–.42*** (.04)
Adjusted R^2	.47	.47	.47

All models include an intercept, indicators for community policing sectors and language of interview, as well as all other variables shown in Table 1. All variables are scaled from 0 to 1. Estimates obtained using pseudo-maximum likelihood. Design-based standard errors are presented in parentheses. $N = 497$. *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

of intergroup inequality that respondents believe is deserved (InEnd – OutEnd). Both variables show significant positive associations with blame. These effects are of roughly equal magnitude.¹⁸ Thus both the actual distribution of resources between groups and the distribution that is regarded as normatively desirable shape attributions that the outgroup are to blame for harming the ingroup.

Finally, model 2.3 then includes the four most basic components of threats to native entitlement. The more well-off immigrants are believed to be (OutEnd), and the less well-off natives are thought to be (InEnd), the higher the level of anti-immigrant blame. However, while evaluations of both groups actual levels of welfare appear to matter for blame, only the evaluation of the outgroup's entitled position—not the ingroup's—also matters. The lower the level of welfare that immigrants are believed to deserve (OutEnd), the greater the blame that is leveled at immigrants. In contrast, the level of welfare believed to be deserved by the ingroup has no independent effect on blame.¹⁹

These results show that anti-immigrant blame is rooted both in evaluations of the distribution of resources between groups, as well as the normative distributions that are believed to be deserved. However, beliefs that the immigrant outgroup have exceeded their entitlements show a stronger effect on blame than beliefs that the ingroup have fallen short of their entitled level of welfare. The level of entitlements thought to be deserved by the outgroup is a particularly important intergroup evaluation when it comes to blame.

¹⁸The standardized regression coefficients are .31 (perceived intergroup inequality) and .38 (deserved intergroup inequality).

¹⁹The standardized effects are as follows: ingroup endowments, –.20; ingroup entitlements, .06; outgroup endowments, .22; outgroup entitlements, –.40.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper tackles the question of why immigrants are blamed. I argue that blame of immigrants and other outgroups is an important variable because of the links between blame and collective political action, anger, and aggressive behavioral intentions. In seeking to understand why immigrants are blamed, I derive two inter-related hypotheses. The first follows scholars such as Blumer (1958) and Horowitz (1985) who emphasize beliefs about the resources and privileges that the ingroup believes that they and the outgroup deserve. When these group entitlements are incongruent with the actual level of endowments enjoyed by each group, then blame is particularly likely to be leveled at the outgroup. The second follows Feldman and Stenner (1997) and Gibson and Howard (2007) in arguing that authoritarian predispositions might also shape anti-immigrant blame, with threat to native entitlement moderating the effect of authoritarianism. Threat, in other words, should have a greater effect on blame for individuals who subscribe to authoritarian values than for individuals holding more libertarian values.

I test these hypotheses with survey data from Alexandra, a township in South Africa where xenophobia and anti-immigrant blame are unfortunately only too salient and realistic for residents. Both hypotheses are supported. The effects of threat and authoritarianism, moreover, hold despite controlling for a number of possible alternative explanations for intergroup animosity. Aside from the usual demographic control variables, measures for five potential confounds were included in the regression models: (1) the effects of influence from peers, and (2) community leaders, (3) exposure to competition over resources with immigrants, (4) the frustrations induced by poverty, and (5) strength of national identity.

There are three broader implications of this research. First, my findings imply points of contact, and points of contention, with two existing theories of intergroup conflict: realistic group conflict theory and the theory of relative deprivation. Contra realistic group conflict theory, it is not just the actual distributions of resources that matter, but also the distributions that are believed to be normatively desirable. And, in contrast to relative deprivation theories of intergroup conflict (Runciman 1966), it is not just the gap between the ingroup's endowments and entitlements that is of interest, but also the gap between the endowments and entitlements of the outgroup. Intergroup animosity may arise when the outgroup are exceeding their deserved position, as well as the ingroup falling short of their normative expectations.

A second implication of this research pertains to the threat-authoritarianism interaction I identify. This effect of authoritarian values shows that blame of immigrants is not just triggered by intergroup contexts, but is partly a function of individual differences. There is a longstanding research tradition that emphasizes the role of personality and individual differences in intergroup attitudes and behavior (see Duckitt 2003). A more recent line of investigation situates the individual in intergroup situations (e.g. Lavine et al. 2002; Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004). Not only does this produce a more rounded model of political behavior, it produces a more dynamic model. The person-situation interaction proposed by Feldman's (2003) theory of authoritarianism, for example, allows us to not only explain individual variation in intergroup animosity, but also societal-level ebbs and flows in intergroup conflict (Sniderman, Hagendoorn and Prior 2004).

The third and final implication of these findings relates to the broader meaning of the threat to native entitlement variable. The appeal of this variable as a determinant of anti-immigrant blame is not simply due to the strength of the association between threat and blame. Rather, as Blumer (1958) pointed out, considering both group endowments and group entitlements offers a means of linking blame to the material and historical contexts in which groups find themselves. Group endowments allow blame to be embedded in contexts of intergroup competition over scarce resources. And group entitlements permit blame to be linked to historically-developed shared beliefs or discourses about rights and status deserved

by various groups.

With respect to the case at hand—blame of immigrants in a South African township—there are two factors that stand out as likely sources of the unequal beliefs about group entitlement that are displayed in Figure 2: the experience of apartheid and immigrant-native discourses. The central feature of apartheid was the denial of citizenship, with all its attendant rights, to black South Africans (Landau 2012). This exclusionary ideology appears to live on in the inequality that Alexandra residents believe should exist between locals and immigrants.

While the history of apartheid provides a contextually-specific backdrop to outgroup blame in Alexandra, the fact that the outgroup are immigrants suggests a more generalizable foundation. Foreign nationals face restricted rights everywhere. Of all the varieties of intergroup conflict, the clash between natives and immigrants is thus particularly likely to be characterized by discordant beliefs about the level of rights and privileges deserved by the in- and outgroups.

Indeed, this point can be taken even further. A common situation in multi-ethnic societies is for one group to view themselves as “sons of the soil,” and to view other groups as interlopers (Weiner 1978). The in-groups in these situations are typically those with a longer history in the area, while the interlopers are usually believed to be migrants, although their actual arrival in the area may well be situated many centuries prior (Horowitz 1985). The issues endemic to conflict with migrants might pertain to many non-migrant groups too. Thus, although this study is focused on native-immigrant tensions, the theory of threat and blame could have relevance for intergroup conflicts more generally.

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