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**WORKING PAPERS**

# Perceived Threat, Contact and Attitudes towards the Integration of Immigrants. Evidence from Luxembourg

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# **Perceived Threat, Contact and Attitudes towards the Integration of Immigrants. Evidence from Luxembourg\***

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the relation between perceptions of immigrant-related threat and the attitudes towards the integration (i.e. assimilation and multiculturalism) of immigrants. Additionally it explores how that relationship is affected by intense contact with foreigners. The analysis is performed on a sample of natives in Luxembourg – the country with the highest proportion of immigrants in Europe. The European Values Study from 2008 for Luxembourg and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used to conduct the analyses.

The outcomes of our analyses reveal that feelings of threat lead to less support for multicultural attitudes, whereas the opposite can be found with respect to support for assimilation attitudes. Furthermore, it was found that more intense contact with immigrant friends significantly reduces the threat perceptions and therefore also leads to less support for assimilation and more support for multicultural attitudes. Lastly, more contact with immigrants also has direct effects on integration preferences.

*Keywords:* intergroup relations ; assimilation ; multiculturalism ; perceived threat ; contact ; Luxembourg

*JEL classification codes:* Z19

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## 1. Introduction

Most western countries have been confronted with an increasingly diverse society over the last decades. This has given rise to growing attention from the academic world to investigate changes in intergroup relations and the consequences of these, at times tense, intergroup relations such as increased prejudice, growing anti-immigrant sentiment and ethnic tensions (Coenders, Lubbers & Scheepers, 2003; Semyonov, Rajzman & Gorodzeisky, 2006). Academic theoretical debates on how to deal with this cultural diversity have only recently started to focus on the integration preferences of both majority and minority groups while taking into consideration the political and public rhetoric of the society in question (Bourhis et al., 1997; Horenczyk et al., 2013). The opinion of majority groups about these societal ideologies of integration has not yet received much empirical research (Brown & Zagefka, 2011; Teney, 2011). The antecedents for these preferences have remained particularly underexposed (Zagefka et al., 2012).

Existing acculturation research suggests that majority members prefer assimilation as the best integration strategy for newcomers (among others: Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007; Navas et al., 2007). This can be explained by the group threat theory (Blalock, 1967; Bobo, 1999; Jackson, 1993) that states that when a minority group challenges the societal position of the majority group by, for example, maintaining their own culture, the majority group will feel threatened, become less open to diversity, prefer assimilation (Davies, Steele & Markus, 2008; Tip et al., 2012; Van Oudenhoven, Prins & Buunk, 1998) and decrease the support for multiculturalism (Tip et al., 2012). The integrated threat theory states, moreover, that a threat increases when the size of the minority group is large (Bobo, 1999; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). In contrast, contact theory contests the group threat theory since they argue that when a minority group is large, more possibilities for intergroup contact can arise (Stein, Post & Rinden, 2000) and consequently this will lead to fewer threat perceptions (Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010; Stephan, Stephan & Gudykunst, 1999), more openness for diversity (Davies et al., 2008) and decreasing prejudice (among others Biggs & Knauss, 2012; Pettigrew, 1998). Several studies on prejudice and negative attitudes toward immigrants have tried to investigate these conflicting theories (among others: McLaren, 2003; Savelkoul et al., 2011; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010; Ward & Masgoret, 2006). However, results have been inconclusive and the debate is still ongoing as a consequence. To the best of our knowledge, so far no studies have used this framework to

reveal the determinants of integration preferences (both assimilation and multiculturalism) among natives.

This paper aims to contribute to the debate by analyzing the following research questions: does the presence of a threat shape the beliefs of natives on how immigrants should integrate? And what is the role of contact with immigrants in that process? This study is innovative in the following ways. Firstly we empirically investigate a majority's opinion on societal ideologies, assimilation and multiculturalism, which is a rather unexplored area (Zagefka et al., 2012). Secondly we combine both insights from acculturation research as well as from two conflicting social psychology theories of intergroup relations (group threat theory and contact theory) to expose the antecedents of these integration preferences. Thirdly, we study these relations in the particular context of Luxembourg which constitutes an excellent case for studying intergroup relations because it has the highest proportion of foreign residents in Europe (Vasileva, 2010). In 2008 43% of residents were of foreign nationality compared to 57% native Luxembourgish nationals (STATEC, 2012). It has to be specified that only 14% of these foreign residents come from countries outside the EU, which means that most foreign residents have a European and Roman Catholic background that is close to that of the native population in terms of culture and religion (Fetzer, 2011).

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **Assimilation and Multiculturalism**

The majority of research dealing with the integration of immigrants builds on the tradition of acculturation which developed several models to investigate integration strategies both at the societal as well as at the individual level (Berry et al., 2011; Bourhis et al., 1997). Rodríguez-García (2010) distinguishes different integration ideologies or strategies that result in three ideal integration types: an assimilation model, a multicultural model and a segregationist model. The most commonly debated and investigated ideologies are acculturation and multiculturalism (Verkuyten, 2011). Since they have been proven to be theoretically and empirically distinct models of integration (Ryan, Casas & Thompson, 2010; Verkuyten, 2011) we will focus only on them in the remainder of this article.

In the assimilation model the focus is on the similarities within a society and on the recognition of one culture - the dominant or majority culture (Verkuyten, 2011). The ideology reaffirms and justifies this culture. Immigrants are therefore expected to participate in all life spheres of the dominant society and diversity is avoided (Rodríguez-García, 2010). In these societies, a strong emphasis is placed on the political rights, the civic participation and the naturalization of immigrants.

In the multicultural model, however, the focus is on diversity and the recognition of differences between groups (Verkuyten, 2011). In these societies immigrants are granted equal ethno-cultural group rights in all life spheres of the host society (Rodríguez-García, 2010) and such a society strives for full and equitable participation of all the groups within it (Berry et al., 2011). There is the general idea that cultural diversity is a resource.

Countries that are confronted with immigration make and adapt policies that are oriented towards one or the other of the integration ideals to create unity in their societies (Spry & Hornsey, 2007). In general, societies thus tend to favour one of the two most common models, multiculturalism (countries such as Canada (Berry, 1991) and the Netherlands (Breugelmans & Van de Vijver, 2004) or assimilation (countries such as the USA (melting pot) and France (Berry, 1991; Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007)). That strategy, however, depends on the definition of integration of the dominant social actors within a society at a certain moment in time (Mahnig & Wimmer, 2000) and can therefore also go against the preferences of both minority and majority groups.

As regards the integration preferences for newcomers, the most influential theory is the bi-dimensional theory of Berry (2001) which uses two dimensions, namely identification and contact with the new culture of the host society and identification with the culture of origin, to map out four strategies: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. Where the first strategy, integration, means that individuals want to maintain their original culture while having daily contact with members of the new society, individuals in the assimilation strategy give up their original culture to fully participate in the host society (Berry et al., 2011). When individuals maintain their original culture, but avoid contact with the host society, it is called separation and the last strategy, marginalization, occurs when individuals neither maintain their original culture nor have contact with the new society.

A vast amount of research has shown that the strategy of integration and thus multiculturalism is preferred by most members of minority groups while the majority group members prefer assimilation (Horenczyk et al., 2013; Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007; Navas et al., 2007). From this argument, it can be deduced that it is important to investigate integration preferences since conflicts and intergroup tensions can arise when majority and minority groups have opposing opinions on what integration means in a country (Berry, 1991; Bourhis et al., 2007).

## **Group threat theory and contact theory**

Since acculturation takes place in intra- and intergroup processes, recent attempts have been made to combine the findings of the acculturation framework with evidence from social psychology theories in order to fully grasp the processes (Brown & Zagefka, 2011; Horenczyk et al., 2013; Van Oudenhoven, Ward & Magoret, 2006; Sirlopú & Van Oudenhoven, 2013). Group threat theory and contact theory have been proven in many studies (for an overview see Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010) to affect attitudes towards immigrants. Therefore, we hypothesize that it is safe to use this framework to go one step further and ask a new question, namely what is the effect that threat and contact have on the majority's view on integration, i.e. assimilation and multiculturalism.

### **Group threat theory**

Group threat theory states that immigrant related threat perceptions arise because of intergroup competition for scarce resources and when the self-interest of the individual or the position of the group is put in question by the arrival of newcomers (Blalock, 1967; Bobo, 1999; Jackson, 1993).<sup>1</sup> Members of the majority group respond to these threats by developing anti-outgroup attitudes and prejudices. Even if the self-interest of the individual is not at stake but there is a perception that the majority group's interests are threatened, such a person will develop more negative outgroup attitudes (Bobo, 1999). This has been proven by several empirical studies (among others: Jackson, 1993; Meuleman, 2011; Schlueter, Schmidt & Wagner, 2008; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010; Semyonov et al., 2006).

The threat perceptions can have different sources. Stephan and colleagues (1998; 1999; 2005) distinguish between realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes. The first one, the realistic threat, reflects threats toward the existence of the majority group, to their political and economic power and to their wellbeing, both

psychological and material. The second, or symbolic, threat relates to the differences between the in- and out-group concerning morals, values, beliefs and attitudes. The third threat, intergroup anxiety, develops when people feel threatened during interaction with members of the out-group (Stephan et al., 1999). Lastly, stereotypes can be considered as a threat since negative out-group stereotypes automatically include expectations of the behavior of the stereotyped group and since these are negative, conflict-laden or negative situations are expected (Stephan et al., 1998). However, in the meta-analysis study of Riek et al. (2006) it was found that these four types of threat are closely correlated, indicating the existence of one common perceived threat factor.

Several antecedents have been proven to increase threat perceptions. At the individual level it seems that when the self-interest of a person is in question, perceptions of group threat develop more easily (Rosenstein, 2008). Thus, people who have a vulnerable position in society, i.e. low education level, low professional status, unemployed, tend to exhibit higher levels of perceived threat (Savelkoul et al., 2011; Semyonov et al., 2006). One should also take the contextual level into account when examining the antecedents of perceived threat. To date, it has been found that the effect of the size of the immigrant population and the economic context of the country play a major role in the development of group level threat (Quillian, 1995; Meuleman, Davidov & Billiet, 2009; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010; Semyonov et al., 2006). A larger size of immigrant population, or even the perceived size or perceived increase in size, would lead to higher threat perceptions. Again, the economic context of a country can influence the threat factor, since a bad economic situation can increase the feeling of competition between the in- and out-groups (Quillian, 1995; Semyonov et al., 2006).

Furthermore, immigrant related threat perceptions are also antecedents of the attitude of majority members towards integration (among others: Florack et al., 2003; Piontkowski, Rohmann & Florack, 2002; Tip et al., 2012). Research has found that the majority group feels threatened when minority groups desire to maintain their own culture (Tip et al., 2012; Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998), especially if their culture is very different from the host society's culture (Maisonneuve & Testé, 2007). They perceive this as a cultural threat to both their cultural identity and their group position (Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998). Members of the majority group will then recur to strategies to protect their own culture (Florack et al., 2003), they decrease their tolerance of diversity (Davies, Steele & Markus, 2008) and this will consequently lead to more support for assimilation and less support for multiculturalism.

Empirical research has shown that when threat perceptions rise, the support for multiculturalism fell (Sirlopu & Van Oudenhoven, 2013; Tip et al., 2012; Verkuyten, 2009) while support for assimilation grew (Florack et al., 2003).

### **Intergroup Contact theory**

The intergroup contact theory opposes the group threat theory since it argues that large groups of immigrants raise opportunities for intergroup contact and that this contact will then lead to more favorable outgroup attitudes (Pettigrew and Tropp; 2006). In his intergroup contact theory, Allport (1982) defined four conditions for good contact so that prejudices between majorities and minorities could be reduced. These four conditions are equal group status within the situation, common goals, intergroup cooperation and authority support (Pettigrew, 1998). However, in the meta-analytical study by Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) it was concluded that the conditions of Allport are not necessary for reducing negative attitudes. Nevertheless, the decrease in prejudice will be greater when all the conditions are fulfilled. Pettigrew (1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and McLaren (2003) point out that friendship between members of majority and minority groups is seen as the best form for contact since it contains all the conditions for good contact. This can be explained by the fact that intimate interpersonal relationships promote the processes that underlie the reduction of prejudice such as learning about the outgroup, reduction of intergroup anxiety and ingroup reappraisal (Pettigrew, 1998). Also, Marsden (1987) states that friendship is contact occurring within core networks, meaning that these are contacts with people with whom emotional ties are established. Similar to friendship is partnership with a foreign resident since this is also a core contact which fulfills the four conditions. We can therefore argue that when one person is in a stable relationship with a person of foreign origin this will have the same effects as regular friendship contacts. Again, other forms of contact, such as daily contact with non-natives at the work-place (Dixon, 2006), contacts in the neighborhood or school (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) and, more recently, extended contact (for an overview: Dovidio, Eller & Hewstone, 2011) have been found to lead to more positive intergroup attitudes.<sup>2</sup>

Research has shown that intergroup contact leads to more support for policies that favor the migrant population and thus multiculturalism (Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2006; Teney, 2011). This can be explained by the fact that contact arouses positive feelings and knowledge about the outgroup which, we argue, then leads to more support for diversity and thus for

multiculturalism. Following the same logic Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006) state that intergroup friendship leads to feelings of sympathy and concern for the conditions and problems of the outgroup and consequently can lead to stronger endorsement of multiculturalism.

Moreover, it seems that intergroup contact is also an antecedent of perceived threat. It has been shown that intergroup contact leads to fewer threat perceptions (Pettigrew et al., 2007; Teney, 2011) which in turn lead to positive outgroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Stephan et al., 1999; Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). More precisely, contact can have both a direct, as well as an indirect, effect on intergroup attitudes through the perceived threat (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Voci & Hewstone, 2003).

One small reservation should be noted. Meuleman (2011) argues that it is very likely that the two theories, group threat theory and contact theory, do not contradict but rather complement each other on different levels; group threat theory works more on the abstract level, while contact theory can counter negative attitudes better at the interpersonal level. This was also found in the study of Wagner et al (2006) where the effect of large immigrant groups had a direct, negative effect on prejudice but that this was moderated by contact.

### **3. The present study**

We argue that Luxembourg makes an interesting case for studying the aforementioned intergroup relations. First of all the country has the highest proportion of foreign residents in Europe (Vasileva, 2010), with an almost 50-50 ratio of minority to majority groups. We therefore reason that this situation can give rise both to threat perceptions as well as to contact opportunities. Secondly, the large group of foreign residents in Luxembourg is culturally and religiously close to the native population. Most immigrants come from other European countries and are predominantly Roman Catholic (Fetzer, 2011). In 2008 the largest groups were Portuguese residents, followed by Italian residents and residents from the neighbouring countries (France, Belgium and Germany) (Statec, 2012). Among the foreign population, only 14% comes from outside EU27 countries. Thirdly, Luxembourg is also a multilingual country of which Luxembourgish is the native language and French and German are the other two official languages (including for administration and jurisdiction) (Tourbeaux, 2012). Research pointed out, however, that French is better known than the other languages among residents

and therefore performs a mediating role between natives and newcomers (Dickes & Berzosa, 2010). Fourthly, the country is also an outlier in its economic situation: it has the largest GDP (per capita in PPS) among the EU27 (Eurostat, 2011), unemployment rates have always been very low and residents are convinced of the need for migration and cross-border workers in order to keep the country running (Fetzer, 2011). Considering all this, one could argue that the level of threat for natives both on an economic level and a cultural level is rather low. However, previous research (Callens, Valentová & Meuleman, 2014) has shown that all residents of Luxembourg, independent of their migratory background, increased their support for assimilation attitudes towards the integration of immigrants whereas the support for multicultural attitudes has declined over the last ten years.

Following our central research questions and overview of the literature, several hypotheses can be formulated for this study of Luxembourg. First of all, since it was found that perceived threat influences integration attitudes, it is argued that, also for the natives in Luxembourg: *The higher the perceived threat, the more one will favor assimilation attitudes towards the integration of immigrants (H 1.1).* Also, the opposite is expected: *The higher the perceived threat, the less one will favor multicultural attitudes towards the integration of immigrants (H 1.2).*

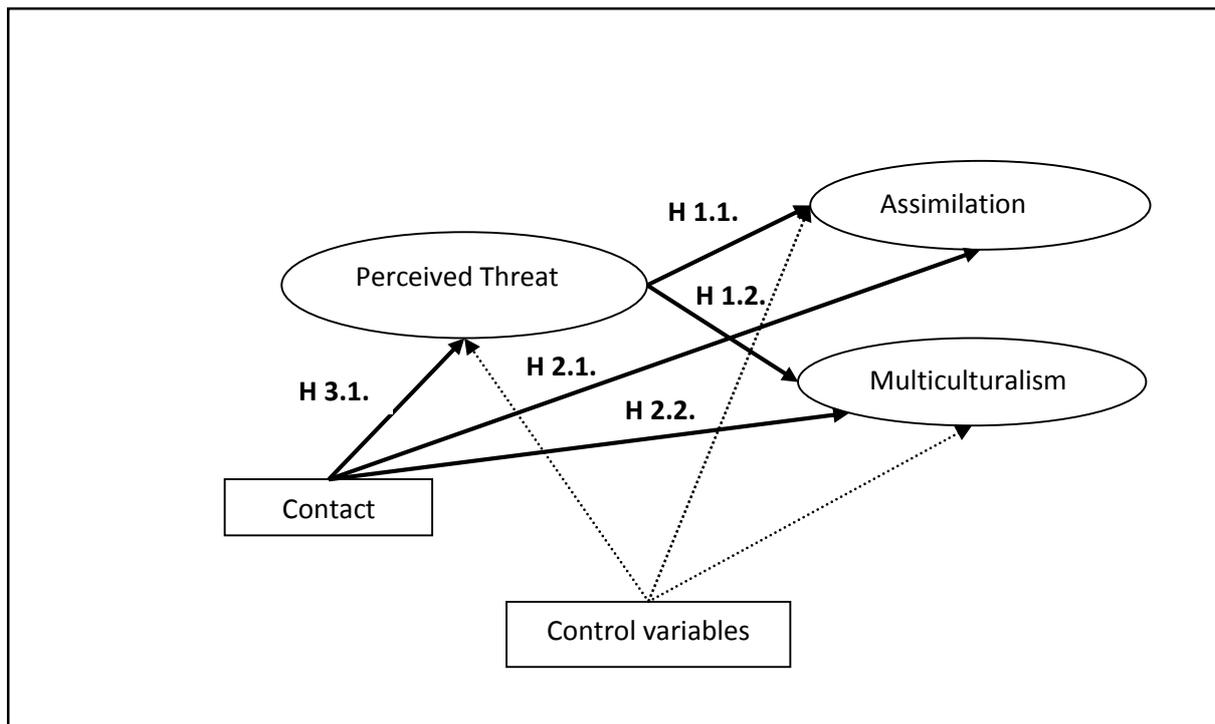
Following the contact theory we expect that the intensity of contact with foreigners has both a direct, as well as an intermediate (via a perceived threat) effect on the attitudes towards integration: *The more contact with foreigners, the less respondents will be in favor of assimilation (H 2.1).* And *the more contact with foreigners, the more respondents will favor multicultural attitudes (H 2.2).*

Furthermore, we know that intense contact has a direct effect on threat perceptions. Therefore we assume that: *Increased intensity of contact with foreign friends or with a foreign partner will lead to fewer perceptions of threat (H3.1).*

Lastly as regards the indirect relationship between contact and integration preferences we expect that: *If people have more contact with foreigners, they will have lower threat perceptions (H 3.1) which consequently will lead to less support for assimilation (H 1.1.) and more support for multiculturalism (H 1.2.).* All these hypotheses can be seen in the conceptual model in figure 1.

A remark has to be made about the directionality of the hypothesized effects. We cannot make any claims about causal relationships since the data used is cross-sectional. However, we can

draw on previous empirical research which has proven that threat has a causal effect on integration preferences (experimental study on a student sample by Florack and colleagues (2003) and an experimental study by Davies, Steele & Markus (2008)) and that contact has both direct as well as indirect effects via perceived threat on intergroup attitudes (Schlueter & Scheepers, 2010). A big advantage of this study is that we test these previously proved causal relations on a random sample, which is generalizable to the general population.



**Figure 1.** Hypothesized model for predicting integration attitudes.

Dotted lines represent relationships that are controlled for.

## 4. Method

### Data

The data used in this study is the 2008 wave of the European Values Study (EVS) of Luxembourg. This data was collected by the VALCOS project (CEPS/INSTEAD) and comprised additional questions specific to Luxembourg.<sup>3</sup> One of these additional questions contained several country-specific items regarding integration preferences which constitute the main dependent variables of this study. Only native residents were retained, resulting in a sample of 571 respondents.<sup>4</sup>

## **Dependent Variables**

To investigate the attitudes towards integration, two distinct theoretical dimensions - assimilation and multiculturalism - were constructed from a question that asked respondents on a scale from zero to four as to whether or not they agreed with the selected statements. The exact description of the items can be found in Table 1. For assimilation, a scale was composed with three items measuring attitudes towards knowledge of Luxembourgish (LU30), joining Luxembourgish associations (LU37) and obtaining Luxembourgish citizenship (which would consequently lead to relinquishing citizenship of origin) (LU39).<sup>5</sup> The scale for multiculturalism also contains three items concerning attitudes toward equal rights and duties without losing citizenship of origin (LU33), cultural exchange (LU34) and maintenance of original traditions and customs (LU36).

## **Key Independent Variables**

The first main independent variable is the composite index of perceived immigrant-related threat at group level. This index is composed of five items that were asked on a ten-point scale (1 stands for agreement with one statement and 10 represents agreement with the opposing statement). The items encompass different threat perceptions, for example items such as immigrants take jobs away from natives (jobs) and immigrants are a strain on a country's welfare systems (welfare) are items measuring realistic threat perceptions, while a country's cultural life is undermined by immigrants (cultural) measures symbolic threat (see Table 1). Since one could argue that this independent variable is theoretically closely linked with the dependent variables, extra tests were undertaken to make sure that they remained distinct variables. Therefore a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed with the six integration items and the threat variable.<sup>6</sup> The outcome confirmed the existence of three distinct dimensions, namely assimilation, multiculturalism and perceived threat.<sup>7</sup> The model's fit is rather good, with an  $\chi^2$  value of 159.607 (df=41), a Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) with a value of 0.046, a Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value of 0.071 and a Comparative Fit Index of 0.927, since the cut-off points for a good fit are considered to be less than 0.08 for SRMR values, less than 0.06 for RMSEA values and 0.90 or more for CFI values (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The standardized factor loadings are in all cases higher than 0.4 and the two integration dimensions are only moderately correlated (-.215). The results of the factor loadings of the full measurement model can also be found in Table 1.

**Table 1:** The exact wording and descriptive analyses of the integration and perceived threat items and the results of the measurement model (N=571).

ITEMS	Mean (st.dev)	Measurement model	
		Beta (std.error)	Stand. Beta
<b>INTEGRATION ITEMS: ASSIMILATION</b> ( <i>scale 1-4</i> )			
-To be integrated into Luxembourg requires to know Luxembourgish ( <b>LU30</b> )	3.4729 (.6861)	1 (0)***	0.549
-Foreigners should join Luxembourgish associations rather than to set up their own associations ( <b>LU37</b> )	2.7828 (.9182)	1.075 (0.173)***	0.441
-To be integrated requires to acquire the Luxembourgish citizenship ( <b>LU39</b> )	2.4521 (.9755)	1.489 (0.229)***	0.575
<b>INTEGRATION ITEMS: MULTICULTURALISM</b> ( <i>scale 1-4</i> )			
-For foreigners, to be integrated is/means to benefit from the same social and political rights and duties as Luxembourgers, without losing their citizenship of origin ( <b>LU33</b> )	2.7038 (.9512)	1 (0)***	0.549
-Integration is successful if foreigners can grasp the important meaning of the Luxembourgish culture and bring to Luxembourgers their meaningful culture ( <b>LU34</b> )	2.9402 (.8050)	0.925 (0.132)***	0.601
A foreigner can be integrated and at the same time keep traditions and customs from own country ( <b>LU36</b> )	3.0375 (.8005)	0.832 (0.112)***	0.544
<b>PERCEIVED IMMIGRANT RELATED THREAT PERCEPTIONS</b> ( <i>scale 0-10</i> )			
-Immigrants take jobs away from natives in a country/ Immigrants do not take jobs away from natives in a country ( <b>jobs</b> )	5.0371 (2.8460)	1 (0)***	0.631
-A country's cultural life is undermined by immigrants/ A country's cultural life is not undermined by immigrants ( <b>cultural</b> )	4.6655 (2.8836)	0.856 (0.077)***	0.533
-Immigrants make crime problems worse / Immigrants do not make crime problems worse ( <b>crime</b> )	6.6973 (2.4873)	1.044 (0.073)***	0.753
-Immigrants are a strain on a country's welfare system/ Immigrants are not a strain on a country's welfare system ( <b>welfare</b> )	6.3321 (2.6012)	1.171 (0.078)***	0.809
-In the future the proportion of immigrants will become a threat to society/ In the future the proportion of immigrants will not become a threat to society ( <b>futthreat</b> )	6.0847 (2.6276)	1.232 (0.080)***	0.845

Source: EVS (2008), (CEPS/INSTEAD). \*: P>0.05; \*\*: p>0.01; \*\*\*: p>0.001. Model fit:  $\chi^2=159.607$ , df=41, SRMR = 0.046, RMSEA= 0.071 and CFI= 0.927.

Correlation assimilation with multiculturalism: -0.215 (SE: 0.075)

Correlation perceived threat with assimilation: 0.569 (SE: 0.052)

Correlation perceived threat with multiculturalism: -0.475 (SE: 0.052)

The second key independent variable is contact, which we operationalize with two variables: the intensity of friendship contacts and the origin of the partner. The intensity of friendship contacts with foreign nationals residing in Luxembourg is measured with the items presented in Table 2. The respondents had to answer to each item with none (0), a few (1), some (2) and a lot (3). Based on the nationality of the friends and their group size in Luxembourg, we then composed three contact variables; namely contact with Portuguese and Italian residents, contact with residents from neighbouring countries (Germany, Belgium and France) and contact with residents from other countries. By adding the frequency of contact together for each group specified above, we calculated the three indexes. A higher score means more contact with a given group of foreign nationals.

The second variable to measure contact is the origin of the partner since a relationship with a foreigner also comprises all the conditions for good contact. Moreover, having a foreign-born partner can lead to large overestimation of the friendship contacts with foreign-born people. The variable was operationalized into three categories; having a partner who was born in Luxembourg (49% and reference category), having a foreign-born partner (7%) and having no partner (44%).

**Table 2:** The exact wording and descriptive analyses of the friendship contact items N=571)

<b>Among your friends, how much contact do you have with friends who are:</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Stand.Dev</b>	<b>Min-Max</b>
<b>Portuguese Italians</b>	1.7093	0.9892	0-6
<b>Germans Belgians French</b>	2.6397	1.3421	0-9
<b>Spaniards Ex-Yougoslavs Other nationalities</b>	0.9509	1.0677	0-7

Source: EVS (2008), (CEPS/INSTEAD).

### **Control Variables**

Since people who have a vulnerable position in a society are more likely to feel threatened (Semyonov et al., 2006), we control for several variables measuring societal position as well as socio-demographic status. These variables also have a direct influence on integration preferences, since higher educated people and females show higher support for multiculturalism (Breugelmans & Van de Vijver, 2004; Breugelmans et al., 2009; Verkuyten,

2009). The first control is education, which is operationalized according to the ISCED classifications (Barro & Lee, 2001): primary education (reference category), secondary education (inferior level), secondary education (superior level) and post-secondary education. Professional status also gives information about societal position. This variable was divided into five categories, according to the ISCO classification, and encompasses both active and non-active labor market positions. The reference category is laborer and the other categories are private employees (largest group), civil servants, self-employed and intellectual professions and people not actively in work.<sup>8</sup> As a third variable people were asked whether they had ever been unemployed for a period longer than three months or not, as this variable can be a proxy for economic competition. The majority of the respondents (92%) were never unemployed for longer than three months. Dependency on social security in the past five years was also questioned and again most people (95%) did not experience this. Lastly, for the socio-demographic variables we included both gender and age.<sup>9</sup>

## Methods

A full structural equation model was performed with Mplus 5 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2007) using the full maximum likelihood procedure, see figure 1 on page 11. The full sample of 571 respondents could be used and the covariance coverage information is above .93 for every variable.

## 5. Results

The structural equation model was specified with perceived threat as predictor for assimilation and multiculturalism and with contact and the control variables as predictor for both perceived threat and the two integration dimensions, see figure 1. The data fitted the model rather acceptably:  $\chi^2$  value of 346.465 (df=169), SRMR = 0.031, RMSEA= 0.043, CFI= 0.899, AIC= 27778.380 and Adj. BIC= 27876.897.<sup>10</sup> The results of this full model can be seen in table 3.<sup>11</sup> The factor loadings in the full structural equation model are almost equal and thus similar in strength to the measurement model. The model explains 43% of the variance for assimilation and 29% for multiculturalism. This is lower for the other latent factor, perceived threat. Only 12% of the variance is explained by the model.

Our first hypotheses were on the relation of threat to the two integration dimensions. In the measurement model (see section 3.3) we could already see that people with higher threat

perceptions tend to favor assimilation more than people who report lower feelings of threat. This effect is thus positive and remained very strong (stand.beta=0.525) even after introducing the contact and control variables. The same holds for the effect of threat on multiculturalism which is also strong (stand.beta=-0.499). The relation to assimilation was negative showing that more feelings of threat lead to less support for multiculturalism. It seems that perceptions of threat do indeed lead to a decrease of support for diversity (multiculturalism) and to more support for assimilation. We can thus corroborate both hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2. Furthermore, it should be noted that the previous correlation between the two integration dimensions disappeared completely after regressing threat perceptions. These results give further evidence for the group threat theory and for the previous research of Florack et al. (2003), Piontkowski et al. (2002) and Tip et al. (2012).

The second key variables measuring contact have less straightforward results. Firstly, we expected a direct effect of friendship contact on the two integration dimensions; however, the data suggest only one direct effect on assimilation, from friendship contact with people from the neighboring countries. It was found that more frequent contact with these friends leads to less support for assimilation. This gives some evidence for our hypothesis 2.1. However, we did not find any direct effect for multiculturalism, hypothesis 2.2.

Secondly, it was found that the intensity of friendship contacts with foreigners does have a direct effect on perceived threat perceptions; however, only with respect to contact with friends from the neighboring countries. Respondents who have frequent contact with friends that come from France, Germany or Belgium show fewer threat perceptions. Nevertheless, this effect is moderate in its magnitude (stand beta = -0.151). We can thus confirm hypothesis 3.1. although we could only find an effect for the friendship contact with the neighboring countries.

We found neither any direct or indirect effect for the two other and more diverse groups, namely the two biggest migrant populations (Portugal and Spain) and the remainder (i.e. Spain and ex-Yugoslavia). It is remarkable that friendship contact with more culturally diverse groups does not have any significant effect on threat perceptions nor on integration preferences, which we will discuss in more detail in the discussion section.

**Table 3:** Standardized results of the structural equation model with direct, indirect and total effects (N=571).

<i>Standardized effects</i>	<b>DIRECT</b>			<b>INDIRECT</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	
	<b>Threat</b>	<b>Assimilation</b>	<b>Multiculturalism</b>	<b>Assimilation</b>	<b>Multiculturalism</b>	<b>Assimilation</b>	<b>Multiculturalism</b>
<i>Mediating variable: Perceived threat</i>		0,525***	-0,499 ***			0.525***	-0.499***
<i>Independent variables</i>							
<b>Friends port&amp;it</b>	-0,081	-0,053	-0,017	-0,043	0,041	-0,096	0,023
<b>Friends neighbors</b>	-0,127*	-0,150 *	-0,024	-0,067 *	0,064*	-0,216***	0,040
<b>Friends others</b>	-0,031	0,106	0,095	-0,016	0,016	0,089	0,111
<b>Luxembourg. partner (ref)</b>							
<b>Foreign partner</b>	0,021	-0,154 **	0,107*	0,011	-0,011	-0,143*	0,097
<b>No partner</b>	0,078	-0,132 *	0,091	0,041	-0,039	-0,091	0,052
<b>No experience with unempl (ref)</b>							
<b>Experience with unemployment</b>	0,028	0,064	-0,082	0,015	-0,014	0,079	-0,096
<b>Never dependent on social sec (ref)</b>							
<b>Dependency on social security</b>	-0,009	-0,035	0,118*	-0,005	0,004	-0,040	0,122*
<b>Primary education (ref)</b>							
<b>Secondary education (inf)</b>	0,053	0,016	0,184**	0,028	-0,026	0,044	0,158*
<b>Secondary education (sup)</b>	0,015	-0,140	0,091	0,008	-0,007	-0,132	0,083
<b>Post-secondary education</b>	-0,139*	-0,160 *	0,091	-0,073	0,069*	-0,233**	0,161
<b>Laborer (ref)</b>							
<b>Private employee</b>	-0,185*	0,052	-0,081	-0,097*	0,093*	-0,045	0,011
<b>Civil servant</b>	-0,253***	0,057	-0,144	-0,133**	0,126**	-0,076	-0,018
<b>Self-empl, intell profession</b>	-0,097	0,073	-0,047	-0,051	0,048	0,022	0,001
<b>Non Active</b>	-0,172 *	0,139	-0,113	-0,090	0,086	0,049	-0,028
<b>Male (ref)</b>							
<b>Female</b>	-0,011	-0,066	0,048	-0,006	0,006	-0,072	0,054
<b>Age</b>	-0,074	-0,009	-0,005	-0,024	0,023	-0,033	0,018

Source: EVS (2008), (CEPS/INSTEAD). \*: P>0.05; \*\*: p>0.01; \*\*\*: p>0.001. Model fit:  $\chi^2=346.465$ ,  $df=169$ , SRMR = 0.031, RMSEA= 0.043 and CFI= 0.899.

Lastly, the data suggests an indirect effect of friendship contact with people from neighboring countries, through perceived threat, on both integration preferences. The effects are both in the expected direction with more intense friendship contact leading to fewer threat perceptions and thus also to lower support for assimilation but increased support for multiculturalism. These findings are once more in line with the expected hypotheses (3.1., 1.1 & 1.2), however, again no effect was found for the other two variables of friendship contact.

With respect to the other contact measure, having a foreign partner or not, the data suggests various interesting findings. It seems that having a partner who was not born in Luxembourg does not have any direct effect on perceptions of threat, nor an indirect effect through threat on integration preferences, but it does have a direct effect on both the integration preferences. People who are together with a life partner from a foreign country show less support for assimilation than people who have a Luxembourgish partner. Again, the opposite can be found for multiculturalism, where people with a foreign partner are also more inclined to support multiculturalism compared to people with a Luxembourgish partner. So both hypotheses 2.1. and 2.2. are corroborated with this specific measure of contact.

Among the control variables, it can be seen that self-interest variables influence the perceptions of group threat and integration attitudes, which is in line with the previous stated research of Savelkoul et al. (2011) and Semyonov et al. (2006). To sum up, it appears that education and professional status have an effect on threat perceptions. Having a higher education degree compared to those who only completed primary education decreases threat perceptions. The same holds true also for private employees, civil servants and people not actively in work compared to laborers. Education also has a direct effect on integration dimensions as people who have the highest level of education seem to express lower support for assimilation compared to the reference group while people having secondary inferior level of education show more support for multiculturalism than the reference group. It should be noted that education and professional status have some indirect effects mediated via threat on the integration dimensions. A last remarkable effect is the direct effect of dependency on social security on multiculturalism; people who were once dependent on social security are more supportive for multiculturalism than people who were never dependent.

## 6. Discussion

In times when societies grow more diverse, it seems more than ever necessary to investigate the opinion of a majority group as to their integration preferences. This can provide insights into the existing views and the possibility for intervening with policies to improve intergroup relations. In this paper we focused on the majority population of Luxembourg, which, given its particular demographic context, constitutes an excellent case for examining intercultural relations. The aim of this paper was twofold: first, to investigate the antecedents of two integration preferences, assimilation and multiculturalism among natives and, second, to look at these antecedents using two conflicting theories, the group threat theory and the contact theory.

The findings suggest that threat perceptions influence the support for assimilation or multiculturalism to a great extent. The data confirmed our hypotheses that people who feel threatened by immigrants show more support for assimilation and less for multiculturalism. This is in line with previous research by Florack et al. (2003), Piontkowski et al. (2002) and Tip et al. (2012). Moreover, we corroborate these findings in a random sample that is representative of the population compared to previous research that used student samples (Florack et al., 2003; Tip et al., 2012) or a non-random sample (Piontkowski et al., 2002). It seems that when the majority feels that the minority group is threatening their economic, cultural and future societal position, they become less open to diversity and prefer assimilative integration strategies. These results furthermore indicate that threat perceptions, even in a country with objectively low levels of realistic and symbolic threat, seem to be closely linked to the natives' perceptions of integration preferences. However, cross-national research is needed to investigate whether this finding also applies in other countries and can therefore be generalized beyond the Luxembourg context. Further, due to data limitations, it was not possible to make a distinction between the different types of threat such as, for example, economic and cultural ones. This would allow an investigation into the question of whether all types of threat relate in a similar way to the attitudes toward integration or if there are some notable differences. Further research could try to reveal these specific links between different threats and integration preferences.

As regards intensity of contacts, the results of the analysis give some mixed evidence. We did find some evidence that having more intense friendship contact leads to a reduction in threat

perceptions and then again to less support for assimilation and more support for multiculturalism. This confirms the previous findings of Verkuyten & Martinovic (2006) that the positive feelings aroused by the friendship and the knowledge gained through the intergroup does lead to more support for policies supporting diversity. However, we only found this effect for the friendship contact with people from neighboring countries, who are culturally and linguistically very close to the native population, and not for friendship contacts with people from more diverse countries. This can partly be explained by the fact that one of the conditions for good contact requires people to have the same group status and this is more often the case for people from neighboring or very similar countries. Having a stable relationship with a foreign partner did not have any effect on threat perceptions but did directly on the integration dimensions. The above findings do not provide enough information to establish a good link between the contact measurements and our variables of interest. It should, however, be acknowledged that the measure used for contact had its limitations since it provided only broad response categories that did not allow for more accurate measures of intensity of contact. Further studies could also shed more light on this interesting puzzle by broadening the contact measures, for instance, through contact with foreigners in the workplace, neighborhood contact and even forms of extended contact. This could enlarge our understanding of the complex interplay between different forms of contact, threat perceptions and integration preferences. Furthermore, in this paper we were unable to simultaneously investigate the opinion of both majority and minority groups on integration preferences due to data limitation while it is important to do so (Bourhis et al., 1997).

Despite the listed limitations, this paper makes several contributions to the literature concerning attitudes toward integration. First of all, it is innovative since it combines two conflicting social psychology theories of intergroup relations in order to empirically explain the antecedents for integration preferences among natives, an understudied field (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2006; Zagefka et al., 2012). Secondly, the research was conducted in a multinational and multilingual setting; the native population of Luxembourg. This gave the possibility to test the hypotheses in a unique intergroup relation framework.

The outcomes of our analyses, however, do not allow drawing conclusions with respect to the causal effects of threat perceptions and friendship contacts on integration policy preferences. Further research based on longitudinal data and experimental studies is needed to present clear policy suggestions. Nevertheless it may be suggested that policy makers who intend to promote

and implement a diverse, yet coherent society should initiate at the same time processes that decrease the threat perceptions and stimulate intercultural contacts among residents as these issues are clearly interrelated. In this way there is a higher chance that the intended integration policy will be accepted by the population.

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Group-level threats refer to threats that concern a host society as a whole whereas individual-level threats focus on how particular individuals experience and view the situation (Rosenstein, 2008). In this paper, we will investigate group level threats using the definition of Riek and his colleagues stating that ‘*intergroup threat occurs when one group’s actions, beliefs, or characteristics challenge the goal attainment or well-being of another group*’ (Riek, Mania and Gaertner (2006) pg 336).

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, due to data limitations we were not able to include these other forms of contact in our present study.

<sup>3</sup> The VALCOS project is supported by the Luxembourg Fonds National de la Recherche (contract FNR/VIVRE/06/01/09) and by core funding for CEPS/INSTEAD from the Ministry of Higher Education and Research of Luxembourg.

<sup>4</sup> We considered one person as native when he/she was born in Luxembourg as well as both that person’s parents.

<sup>5</sup> Considering item LU39: until the law on double nationality of the 23th of October 2008 (effective 1th of January 2009), people had to give up their nationality in order to acquire the Luxembourgish nationality (Zahlen & Thill, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> The correlation matrix can be requested from the author.

<sup>7</sup> Since these dimensions are closely linked, we also performed a CFA in which all items had to load onto one dimension. The model did not have an acceptable fit:  $\chi^2$  value of 322.629 (df=44), SRMR = 0.074, RMSEA= 0.105 and CFI= 0.828. This confirms again that the dimensions are theoretically and empirically distinct.

<sup>8</sup> The category of people not actively in work included retirees, housewife, students, unemployed and disabled people.

<sup>9</sup> The variable age was squared to check for curvilinearity and was introduced into all the analyses. It is, however, not significant and was therefore excluded from the final analyses.

<sup>10</sup> We did perform robustness checks for the model and fitted an alternative model where threat is the dependent variable and assimilation and multiculturalism are mediators between contact and threat. The model was slightly worse:  $\chi^2=351.187$ , df=170, SRMR = 0.032, RMSEA= 0.043, CFI= 0.897, AIC= 27781.101 and Adj BIC= 27878.446. We therefore maintained the original model since we also draw on previous empirical research which has proven that threat has a causal effect on integration preferences (experimental study on a student sample by Florack and colleagues (2003) and an experimental study by Davies, Steele, and Markus (2008)).

<sup>11</sup> In table 3 all effects are given with the standardized coefficients. The unstandardized coefficients can be requested to the author.

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