

Speaking Out on Immigration Policy in Australia: Identity Threat and the Interplay of Own Opinion and Public Opinion

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This article presents a survey of 667 Australian voters examining support for a new conservative social movement in relation to attitudes toward Asian immigration, involvement in an evolving anti-immigration debate, and willingness to speak out politically. Supporters of the new conservatives were motivated to get involved and speak out by perceived threat to White Australians, as well as the perception of a favorable normative climate. In contrast, for opponents, higher education and welcoming attitudes toward Asian immigration were associated with political involvement, as well as the perception that the social climate was changing against them (becoming more conservative). The data show that in a time of changing public opinion, people may speak out more when they perceive that their views are losing ground, providing evidence for active resistance rather than a spiral of silence on the part of the losing side.

Since the mid-1990s, Australia has undergone a political transformation marked by the rise of new socially conservative politicians and voters. The new social conservative movement was critical of Australia's policy of multiculturalism and warned of the danger of Australia being swamped by foreigners, and particularly by Asians. This article begins with a historical overview of Australian immigration, addressing the shifts in social context, research findings, and theoretical approaches over recent years. This portion of the article, like the

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present special issue more generally, uses an interdisciplinary approach to help international readers take a broad perspective on the theoretical and social issues involved.

We then address a narrower question empirically: To analyze the social forces that shape policy changes and respond to them, we present a study of the processes underlying speaking out on political issues. Exploring people's interest in following the new debates and their willingness to speak out in public on the issues, we conducted a survey of White Australians who self-categorized as supporters or opponents of the new conservative social movement. Drawing on theoretical perspectives on identity threat and on (changing) public opinion as a source of social influence, we sought to demonstrate that different mechanisms might underlie political outspokenness from the two sides.

A Historical Overview of Australian Migration Research

Our short discussion here cannot do justice to the complex historical and social issues surrounding migration in Australia, nor to the depth and breadth of scholarly research on the topic. Interested readers may wish to pursue more detailed analyses (e.g., Haslam & Pedersen, 2007; Jupp, 2002; Mares, 2002; Sherington, 1990).

National polls on baseline attitudes to immigration reveal that the proportion of Australians who believed there are too many immigrants ranged from 40% to 60% in the 1950s, fell consistently below 30% in the 1960s, and ranged from 30% to 50% in the 1970s (see Gibson, McAllister, & Swenson, 2002, Figure 2). These decades saw large post-World War II influxes of immigrants from Europe, while a "White Australia" policy excluding Asian and other non-White immigrants was gradually dismantled, ending formally in the 1970s. The early 1980s saw large waves of refugees from the Vietnam war arriving in Australia, while the proportion of Australians who believed there are too many immigrants fluctuated from 30% to over 65% in the 1980s and from 40% to 70% in the 1990s, before falling back to the low 40% range at the start of the 21st century. Since the late 1990s relatively large intakes of skilled immigrants have coincided with the emergence of asylum seekers (refugee claimants) as a subgroup of immigrants targeted with particularly harsh policy measures and public condemnation (e.g., Mares, 2002; Marr & Wilkinson, 2003). The changing political context, with the growth of a new conservative movement partly defined by vocal anti-immigration policies, forms the basis for the present research.

In addressing the heterogeneity in attitudes to immigration, a recurring question in Australian research has been whether or not opposition to immigration should be seen as a form of prejudice. Some research adopts the view that opposition to immigration is justified by real dangers posed to Australian cultural or economic interests (e.g., Blainey, 1984; Buchanan, 1976, p. 10; see also Betts, 2001), or emphasizes that immigrants in modern Australia experience little

prejudice (e.g., Evans & Kelley, 1991). However, many social psychological approaches have explicitly measured hostile attitudes by adapting prejudice scales (e.g., Beswick & Hills, 1972; Walker, 1994).

Since the late 1990s, Australian researchers have focused particularly on hostility to refugees. These scholars almost universally examine community support for exclusionary policy in relation to prejudice models (e.g., Haslam & Pedersen, 2007; cf., Betts, 2001). Within quantitative social psychology, some research has assessed hostility as a function of Stephan and Stephan's (1996) integrated threat model, demonstrating that negative attitudes are associated with both symbolic threat (the perception of cultural, religious, and linguistic differences) and realistic threat (the perception of economic competition, criminality, and health risks; see, e.g., Schweitzer, Perkoulidis, Krome, Ludlow, & Ryan, 2005). More broadly, Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller, and Lalonde (2007) found that perceptions of asylum seekers as a threat to the nation and the perception that other Australians also supported harsh measures (hostile national norms) both promoted hostile attitudes. Hostile norms have been implicated as predictors of hostility to foreigners in a number of studies (e.g., Johnson, Terry, & Louis, 2005; Pedersen, Attwell, & Heveli, 2005), creating a spiral of prejudice whereby increasing perceptions of hostile public opinion consolidate hostility to immigrants and refugees (see also, Hartley & Pedersen, 2007).

In sociological research, Australian researchers propose that a new racism has emerged in which immigrants are positioned as threatening via a discourse in which foreigners dilute or undermine the national culture and Australian "way of life" (see also, Augoustinos & Quinn, 2003; Goot & Watson, 2005; Pehrson & Green, this issue). Hage (1998, 2003) has advanced an influential argument that growing, baseless hostility to immigrants in Australia represents a "paranoid nationalism" in which displaced "white worrying" is projected onto foreigners by White Australians who feel ideologically and economically marginalized by globalization (see also Bulbeck, 2004; Crock, 2004; Dunn, Forrest, Burnley, & McDonald, 2004). Hage argued that this anxiety and displacement is especially common among working-class men. Consistent with this argument, hostility to immigration or asylum seekers has been associated with lack of education/working-class background and male gender in several studies (e.g., Betts, 2001; Bulbeck, 2004; Pedersen et al., 2005; Pedersen, Watt, & Hansen, 2006).

The Present Research: A Study of Speaking out on Asian Immigration

In the present article, we describe a specific and more narrow social-psychological study that we hope also has broad theoretical and applied interest. For the remainder of this article, we seek to address the social forces that shape immigration policy changes and respond to them, namely citizens' engagement in political debates. We present empirical research concerning the processes

underlying speaking out on political issues, and on Asian immigration in particular, focusing on the role of far-right political parties in enabling supporters to speak out publicly to adopt conservative stands, on the one hand, and to trigger resistance and contestation, on the other.

The rise of a new Australian political party in the mid-1990s, One Nation, is widely seen as the trigger for the wave of exclusionary measures subsequently adopted by mainstream parties and supported by their voters. The emergent One Nation party advocated a return to an explicitly racialized anti-immigration policy (Gibson et al., 2002; Jupp, 2002). One Nation leader Pauline Hanson, in her 1996 maiden speech in the federal parliament, raised the specter of Australia being “swamped by Asians” (Rapley, 1998). Bolstered by other populist conservative stances, the anti-immigration policies of One Nation attracted up to 12% of the national vote and 25% of the state vote in Queensland, the heartland of the party. During the late 1990s fear and hostility to non-White boat people were exploited for electoral purposes across the political spectrum (Mares, 2002; Marr & Wilkinson, 2003).

Since then, however, the new conservative movement has suffered from declining popularity and internal divisions. Former members of One Nation have entered politics as competing independents, or formed rival parties (e.g., the City Country Alliance and Pauline’s United Australia Party), new conservative parties appeared (e.g., Family First), and mainstream parties co-opted some One Nation positions, particularly around the treatment of asylum seekers. Pauline Hanson herself was condemned briefly to jail for electoral fraud in 2003, although the conviction and sentence were seen by many supporters as politically motivated, increasing her aura of martyrdom. Some academics have argued that One Nation’s anger-based politics could not mobilize support over the long term (e.g., Deutchmann, 2000), peaking at 12% nationally in 1998. However, the new conservative movement continues to field candidates and parties. In the most recent national election, One Nation and its splinter groups/successors attracted tens of thousands of Australian votes (Australian Electoral Commission, 2008).

Although some Australians have vehemently challenged the new social conservatives, other Australians continue to relate deeply to the arguments put forward (see Goot, 2000; Goot & Watson, 2005). The stand “against political correctness” is particularly popular and was co-opted by the mainstream Liberal/National coalition in a series of polemics against “Black armband history” (Australians’ ostensibly excessive self-recrimination regarding past racism). The Australian media seized on this polarization, and policies that might formerly have been seen as reactionary (e.g., opposition to Asian immigration, or a view that Islam is inherently anti-women or anti-democratic) became a staple of discourse (e.g., on talk-back radio: Goot, 2000).

To explore people’s interest in following the political debates, as well as willingness to speak out on the issues, we conducted a survey of White Australians who

self-categorized as supporters or opponents of one of the emergent conservative movements. We tested the hypothesis that different mechanisms might underlie political outspokenness from the two sides: the newly resurgent conservatives, and the newly defensive progressives. In particular, we were interested in how new conservatives and their opponents might differ in reactions to perceived current norms and reactions to perceived changes in the social norms—a distinction suggested by “spiral of silence” research (Noelle-Neumann, 1993).

Current Norms and Changing Norms as Sources of Influence

As noted above, researchers have observed that other Australians' views on immigration influence participants' views and willingness to speak out in the Australian immigration debate (e.g., Hartley & Pedersen, 2007; Louis et al., 2007). Importantly, however, beliefs about others' views may influence action and attitude change regardless of whether such beliefs are real or false. False beliefs about support for one's position can consolidate erroneous views, as well as reducing the likelihood of attitude change, and increasing the likelihood of speaking out (Marks & Miller, 1987; Miller, 1993). A “false consensus effect,” in which individuals overestimate the normative support for their own views, is thought to emerge naturally when individuals overgeneralize from the views of like-minded others, motivated to affirm the truth of their beliefs (Marks & Miller, 1987). However, rather than emerging equally across the political spectrum, the false consensus effect may become asymmetric if the media selectively reports one side's position, reinforcing the illusion of near unanimity for that side. For example, Hartley and Pedersen (2007) documented that while all participants overestimated the normative support for their own views on asylum seekers in the community, those in favor of harsh treatment had the most exaggerated perceptions of public support. The researchers argue that this asymmetric process serves to maintain and legitimize harsh policies toward asylum seekers, as those hostile to asylum seekers speak out and those in favor of more welcoming policies are silenced. We therefore hypothesize an interaction of own opinion and perceptions of the current norm, with perceived conservative norms differentially mobilizing new conservatives.

In her spiral of silence theory, Noelle-Neumann (1993) takes this argument one step further. She argues that as supporters of a view assume a majority position, they are more and more likely to speak out, while opponents are more and more likely to be silent. This spiral of silence escalates the speed of opinion change, as individuals increasingly misperceive the majority position as universally endorsed. In the present research, building on spiral of silence theory, we are interested in distinguishing between perceptions of the current normative climate and perceptions of the degree of change, and examining the reactions of supporters

and opponents of the new conservative movement in Australia to both of these normative perceptions.

In contrast to the spiral of silence model, we reasoned that opponents of the new conservatives would be motivated to speak out by the perception that public opinion was turning against them. Perceptions of changing public norms is arguably analogous to instability of status relations within the social identity framework, and perceiving worsening status relations has been associated with intergroup competitiveness in many studies (e.g., Johnson et al., 2005; Louis et al., 2007). Accordingly, changing public opinion may provoke a defensive reaction whereby opponents of the new conservatives try to reassert themselves politically and to contest the norms of the Australian in-group, rather than conforming to conservatism or relapsing into mute resentment (see also, Iyer, Schmader, & Lickel, 2007; Packer, 2008; Sani & Reicher, 1998; Sani & Todman, 2002).

Moreover, according to Hage (2003), those who oppose the new conservative mainstream in Australia see themselves as a “moral minority” comprising the last outraged vestige of decent society (see also, Bulbeck, 2004). Perceiving a moral basis for one’s attitude has been associated with willingness to resist incongruent norms in past research (e.g., Hornsey, Majkut, Terry, & McKimmie, 2003). Group members challenge or resist norms when they are seen as conflicting with other in-group standards (e.g., Hornsey, Jetten, McAuliffe, & Hogg, 2006; Iyer et al., 2007; Sani & Reicher, 1998; Sani & Todman, 2002; Smith & Louis, 2008). Such resistance is functional for the in-group: Resistance may often be effective in producing policy change (Hornsey, 2006; Moscovici, 1991), and guarding the group from error or corruption (Janis, 1972; Packer, 2008). In short, testing the competing hypotheses that perceived increasing conservatism would differentially silence the movement’s opponents, as suggested by spiral of silence theory, versus differentially provoke their resistance, as suggested by dissent research, offers an interesting contribution to the research literature.

An important consequence of this approach is that we measure two aspects of norms, in the present study: not only perceptions of current public opinion, but also perceptions of changing public opinion. Perceived change in public opinion (increasing conservatism) is hypothesized to provoke opponents of the new conservative movements to involve themselves in the political debate and speak out on the issue. Perceptions of current normative support for anti-immigration stances, however, should motivate new conservatives to get involved in the anti-immigration debate and speak out on the topic.

As a third independent variable, we expect that the groups will differ if new conservatives, compared to opponents, perceive higher identity threat as White Australians from Asian immigration, and are motivated by this threat to stronger involvement in the political debate and willingness to speak out (Grant & Brown, 1995; Schweitzer et al., 2005). In short, in the present study we propose to test not only the independent role of threat and norms, which have been shown

in past research to influence social attitudes and action (e.g., Hartley & Pedersen, 2007; Louis et al., 2007), but also the unique contributions of current and perceived changing public opinion, and the interactions among threat, norms, and participants' own social attitudes in a political context. We anticipate two-way interactions between own opinion and perceptions of current public opinion, own opinion and perceptions of change in public opinion, and own opinion and threat. New conservatives are expected to get involved in the debate and express their own opposition to immigration when the public supports their views (conforming to the conservative current norm), and when they perceive Asian immigration as more threatening. We predict that threat will in turn moderate the norm by own attitude interaction for new conservatives. New conservatives who perceive higher identity threat may speak out regardless of the perceived current norm, consistent with models of "loyal dissent" and counterconformity (Hornsey, 2006; Packer, 2008).

In contrast, for opponents of the new conservatives, neither conservative current norms nor perceptions of threat are expected to mobilize participation in the debate, whereas the perception of increasing conservatism (changing norms) is hypothesized to mobilize action in favor of Asian immigration. These opponents of the new conservatives are thus hypothesized to react against the perception of increasing conservatism (changing opinion norms) with counter-mobilization.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Surveys were sent to voters in three electorates in the state of Queensland, Australia, with 667 respondents who identified as White Australian returning useable questionnaires. The sample represented a 28.7% response rate, from 2,502 mailed surveys. Non-White respondents were excluded from the analyses below (13 Asian participants, 7 Indigenous Australians, 18 "Other," and 14 missing). The three electorates did not differ in response rates, and drew respondents from a large capital city (Brisbane), a regional city and its rural surroundings (Capricornia), and a rural area (Maranoa). Participants were evenly distributed by gender (51% female, $n = 338$) and ranged in age from 17 to 90 years ($Mdn = 43$, $M = 44.06$, $SD = 15.19$). The sample was biased in favor of more educated respondents, with 47% having completed some level of postsecondary education.

Materials

Political stance. Respondents were classified as supporters of the new conservative movement ($n = 374$, 56%) or opponents ($n = 224$, 34%) using a

single-item measure with a 7-point response scale: “How favorable is your overall impression of [One Nation party leader] Pauline Hanson?” The distribution was strongly bimodal, with the minority of neutral respondents answering at the scale midpoint of 4 ($n = 69$, 10%) excluded from the analyses. We argue in this article that favorability toward Pauline Hanson is a marker of support for the new conservative movement, although many supporters would not identify with terms such as “conservative” and “right wing” (the mainstream Australian conservative party is the Liberal party). This point is elaborated in the discussion below.

Demographic variables. Age, gender (coded 1 = *female*, 2 = *male*), and education were measured with single-item measures. Highest level of education was coded ordinally on a 6-point scale from 1 (*primary school or below*), to 6 (*university education—higher degree/postgraduate studies*).

Own support for Asian immigration and perceptions of normative public support were each measured on 9-point scales from -4 (*strongly oppose*), to $+4$, (*strongly support*) with single-item measures: “Are you personally [Do you think most Australians are] against or for Asian immigration?”

Perceptions of increasing conservatism were also measured on a single 9-point item, that is, “Do you think most Australians are becoming less or more opposed to Asian immigration?” -4 (*less opposed*), to $+4$ (*more opposed*). Perceptions of current and increasing conservatism were weakly correlated ($r = -.27$, $p < .001$: those who perceived lower normative support for Asian immigration also believed Australia was becoming more opposed to Asian immigration). As the variables are distinguished both empirically and on theoretical grounds (Noelle-Neumann, 1993), we retain them as separate predictors in the analyses below.

Threat to White Australians was measured with three items on 1–7 scales: “Do you think that the economic and social standing of White Australians is currently under threat?” “How often have you thought that Asians are doing better than White Australians?” and “How many special privileges do Asians receive compared to White Australians?” The items were averaged to create an index of perceived threat ($\alpha = .74$). We did not explore the realistic/symbolic distinction in the present study, although the items appear to tap realistic threat more heavily. All three items make salient comparative judgments of economic and social standing, although the last item may also invoke symbolic threat by suggesting that Asians benefit from special privileges.

Involvement in the debate was measured with three items measuring interest in following the debate on 7-point scales (e.g., “How often have you thought about Pauline Hanson and these issues?”). The items were averaged such that higher scores indicated stronger involvement ($\alpha = .85$).

Public outspokenness was measured with two items measuring willingness to speak out publicly on the topic, namely, “How willing would you be to discuss Pauline Hanson and these issues with someone with a different opinion?” and

Table 1. Comparing Supporters and Opponents of The New Conservative Movement

	Opponents		New conservatives		F	η^2
	M	(SD)	M	(SD)		
Age	40.64	(13.95)	46.62	(15.46)	21.91***	.04
Gender	57% F		47% F		6.03*	.01
Education	4.06	(1.46)	3.19	(1.37)	53.54***	.08
Own support for Asian immigration	5.21	(1.23)	3.01	(1.30)	261.56***	.31
Perceived norm of Australian support	3.78	(1.11)	2.83	(1.07)	50.30***	.08
Perceived increasing conservatism	4.77	(0.96)	5.08	(1.06)	6.25***	.01
Perceived threat to White Australians	2.82	(1.28)	5.05	(1.31)	250.44***	.30
Involvement in debate	3.84	(1.66)	5.13	(1.43)	100.83***	.15
Public outspokenness	4.07	(1.76)	4.68	(1.80)	16.54*	.03

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

“How willing would you be to discuss Pauline Hanson and these issues with a reporter?” Items were averaged such that higher scores indicated more willingness to speak out ($\alpha = .68$).

Results

The analyses below compared mean differences between the new conservative movement’s supporters and opponents on predictors and outcome variables (summarized in Table 1). Predictors of outspokenness and involvement were then analyzed within the two groups using a four-step regression model with demographic controls at Step 1, main effects of own opinion, change in public opinion and threat at Step 2, the two-way interactions of threat, norms and own opinion at Step 3, and the three-way interactions among own opinion, public opinion, and threat at Step 4. Table 2 summarizes these analyses. For each effect, the significance of the difference between supporters and opponents is reported in parentheses (i.e., whether the difference in associations is reliable in an analysis of the pooled data).

New Conservatives and Their Opponents

As shown in Table 1 supporters of the new conservatives were older, more likely to be men, and less well educated than opponents. The groups also differed in their personal opinions on Asian immigration: the new conservatives rejected policies supporting Asian immigration, whereas opponents welcomed them. Respondents on both sides perceived that the Australian public was hostile to Asian

Table 2. Predicting Public Outspokenness and Involvement in The Debate for Supporters and Opponents of the New Conservative Movement

Step	Opponents		New conservatives						
	R ² Δ	FΔ	Significant predictors	β	Step	R ² Δ	FΔ	Significant predictors	β
Involvement in the debate									
1	.05	3.59**	Education	.17** (-.15****)	1	.03	1.93**		
2	.07	3.91***	Support for immigration	.25*** (-.18****)	2	.11	11.30***	Threat	.29*** (.13***)
			Increasing conservatism	.18** (-.06)					
3	.03	1.15	Support × Threat	-.20** (.16**)	3	.03	2.16**	Support × Norms	.18*** (.20***)
4	.00	0.22			4	.01	2.97*	Support × Norms × Threat	-.21** (-.12)
Public outspokenness									
1	.05	3.37**	Education	.13** (-.05)	1	.02	2.39*	Gender (male)	.14** (.02)
2	.06	3.15**	Support for immigration	.19** (-.08)	2	.05	5.03***	Threat	.20*** (.14***)
3	.02	0.58			3	.04	2.29**	Support × Norms	.21*** (.18***)
4	.02	1.64			4	.02	3.56**	Support × Norms × Threat	-.26*** (-.25***)

Note. For each effect, a test of the significance of the difference between supporters and opponents is reported in parenthesis (i.e., the coefficient for interaction with the supporter/opponent variable, coded 1 - 1, using the pooled sample.)
Significance: * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$; **** $p < .001$.

immigration and becoming more hostile, but this perception was stronger among the new conservatives, who saw public opinion as more aligned with their own views. Supporters of the new conservative movement believed more strongly that White Australians were under threat, and were also more involved in the debate and more willing to speak out in public.

Predicting Public Outspokenness and Involvement in the Debate

For opponents of the new social conservative movement, involvement in the debate and willingness to speak out publicly were both predicted by higher levels of education and stronger personal support for Asian immigration (see Table 2). Opponents were also more involved in the debate to the extent that they perceived public opinion as increasingly conservative, that is, as becoming more opposed to Asian immigration. Perceived threat to White Australians played no direct role for opponents, as predicted. An interaction was observed, however, such that at high threat, respondents showed a moderate level of involvement regardless of own attitudinal support for Asian immigration ($\beta = -.03, p = .725$), whereas at low threat, those with stronger support for immigration were more involved ($\beta = .41, p = .002$).

In contrast, for supporters of the new conservatives, involvement in the debate and willingness to speak out publicly were directly positively associated with feelings of threat to White Australians, and own attitudinal support for Asian immigration played no direct role. An interaction between perceived norms and own support for Asian immigration indicated that among those who perceived public opinion as more supportive of Asian immigration (+1SD), attitudes more supportive of Asian immigration were associated with involvement ($\beta = .23, p = .036$) and outspokenness ($\beta = .36, p = .002$). Among those who perceived public opinion as less supportive of Asian immigration, however, conservative personal views (lower own support for Asian immigration) were linked to stronger involvement in the debate ($\beta = -.31, p = .003$) and more willingness to speak out publicly ($\beta = -.20, p = .067$).

The above interaction was, in turn, moderated by supporters' perceptions of threat to White Australians. Those who felt most threatened felt moderately involved and were willing to speak out regardless of their beliefs about public opinion ($ps > .161$). Among new conservatives who felt less threatened as White Australians and who perceived a norm supporting Asian immigration, higher own support for Asian immigration led to greater speaking out ($\beta = 1.92, p = .001$), and marginally greater involvement in the debate ($\beta = .98, p = .079$). In contrast, among new conservatives who felt less threatened as White Australians and who perceived a norm opposing Asian immigration lower own support for Asian immigration (more conservative attitudes) fostered involvement in the debate

($\beta = -1.14, p = .004$) and speaking out publicly ($\beta = -.77, p = .132$; although this latter trend was not significant).

Discussion

In the present study, supporters of the new conservatives were directly motivated by perceived threat to White Australians to become involved in the debate about Asian immigration, and to speak out on this topic. The perception of a favorable normative climate also increased their engagement and outspokenness. For opponents of the new conservatives, higher education and welcoming attitudes toward Asian immigration were associated with political engagement, but an additional factor was the perception that the social climate was changing against them (becoming more conservative). In a time of changing public opinion, we argue, the importance of normative support is moderated by own opinion and by specific contextual factors such as identity threat. Individuals may feel a need to speak out when they perceive that their views are losing ground politically, providing evidence for active resistance on the part of the losing side rather than a spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1993).

Differences between Supporters and Opponents of the New Conservatives

A significant disparity between One Nation supporters and opponents was found on issues of race and immigration, consistent with previous Australian research. The effect sizes shown in Table 1 are substantial and reflect the degree of polarization in the sample and the wider social context, with bimodal distributions observed on variables such as own support for Asian immigration. The new conservative movements define themselves primarily according to social issues such as racial immigration (e.g., Rapley, 1998), and it is not at all surprising that these views are reflected in their adherents' political attitudes (e.g., Gibson et al., 2002). In describing the characteristics of this emergent political force, the present study replicates past research showing support for the new conservatives correlated with age, male gender, and lower levels of education (e.g., Betts, 2001; Bulbeck, 2004; Pedersen et al., 2005).

What might not have been anticipated as readily are the significant between-group differences in perceived norms and perceptions of the changing norm on the issue. Both supporters and opponents of the new conservatives perceived Australians as hostile to Asian immigration and becoming even more so. However, supporters of the new conservatives perceived the wider public as more conservative and increasingly aligned with their views (see also, Hartley & Pedersen, 2007). An accurate and consensual understanding of public opinion might not be expected even for an issue widely debated in the Australian media, because

individuals tend to overgeneralize from their own preferred media, friends, and acquaintances (the false consensus effect: Miller, 1993). The present finding, however, is consistent with the perception that supporters of the new conservatives are disproportionately likely to have had their views heard by audiences across the political spectrum, and are disproportionately unlikely to have heard the views of Australians who support higher Asian immigration. If so, new conservatives' exaggerated views of the normative support for excluding future Asian immigrants could consolidate attitudinal opposition to Asian immigration, reduce the likelihood of attitude change, and increase the likelihood of speaking out (Marks & Miller, 1987; Miller, 1993).

The asymmetry between conservatives and their opponents thus provides partial support for Noelle-Neumann's (1993) spiral of silence in the immigration context. If conservative views are over-represented to all audiences, but particularly to audiences of new conservatives themselves, it is unsurprising but significant that new conservatives see themselves as more involved in the ongoing debate, and report stronger willingness to speak out in public on the issue in future. In this sense, the perception of conservative public opinion could serve to perpetuate and extend an exclusionary immigration policy (see also, Hartley & Pedersen, 2007). Nevertheless, the contention that individuals passively conform to an increasing hegemony of political conservatism is challenged in the results of the present study. In this sense, our data provide stronger support for a spiral model of public outspokenness.

Differences between the Motivations of Supporters and Opponents

Important differences were observed in the motivations of supporters and opponents for involvement and engagement in the ongoing debate. In the present data, supporters of the new conservatives are directly motivated by perceived threat to White Australians. The finding suggests a considerable degree of success by the new conservative movement in disseminating the view that Asian immigrants pose a danger to Australia and in mobilizing supporters to act on that account. The finding that supporters are motivated by threat is consistent with past research (e.g., Grant & Brown, 1995). Although some sociologists have emphasized working class economic insecurity more broadly (e.g., Davis & Stimson, 1998), evidence has also been found for economic concerns about immigrants specifically (e.g., Gibson et al., 2002) as well as racism (e.g., Fraser & Islam, 2000) as drivers of opposition to immigration in Australia.

The role of public opinion in the present data is consistent with the traditional conformity findings for new conservatives, as expected. Overall, new conservatives were more likely to speak out and become involved in the debate when they perceived normative support for their opinion. However, this effect was moderated by perceived threat. Whereas those who perceived high threat to White Australians

tended to be involved and willing to speak out regardless of public opinion (a flattening of responsiveness), among those who perceived low threat, public opinion supportive of Asian immigration was associated with greater engagement by more moderate conservatives, and public opinion hostile to Asian immigration with greater engagement by those with stronger anti-immigration views. This finding is somewhat contradictory to the view of the new conservative movements as the home of independent-minded voters determined to express their personal attitudes regardless of political correctness. The new conservatives were more willing to express their political views when they perceived normative support from others and favorable public opinion, but they showed no direct relationship between strength of attitude and action (see also, Gibson et al., 2002; Hartley & Pedersen, 2007).

From a theoretical position the more interesting point is that the present data show different motivations for engagement in a political debate from members of the two "sides," and interactions between own opinion, public opinion, and threat that have not been explored in previous research. For opponents of the new conservatives, higher education and welcoming attitudes toward Asian immigration were both direct predictors of engagement. However, opponents were also motivated to greater involvement by the perception the climate is changing against them (becoming more conservative). The present data suggest that as the political debate becomes increasingly conservative, both conservative and progressive Australians are motivated to increased involvement and likelihood of speaking out. In this sense a spiral of outspokenness is demonstrated, in contrast to the spiral of silence defined by Noelle-Neumann (1993).

This finding speaks to the importance of considering dissent and resistance as well as conformity in studies of public opinion change (Hornsey & Jetten, 2004; Hornsey et al., 2003, 2006; Packer, 2008). Very little research has examined the basis of group-based dissent (cf. Chan, Louis, & Hornsey, 2009; Moscovici, 1991; Sani & Reicher, 1998; Sani & Todman, 2002), but several promising lines of research could be applied. It could be speculated that opponents of the new conservative movement are more likely to see their views as morally grounded (Hage, 1998, 2003); perceiving a moral basis for one's attitudes is associated with willingness to resist incongruent norms (Hornsey et al., 2003). Progressives may also have internal metanorms promoting dissent in the face of opposing public opinion (see Hornsey & Jetten, 2004; Hornsey et al., 2006). Progressives might disidentify with Australian national norms, in the face of perceived conservative domination, or identify with a higher order "human" identity (Haslam, 2006; Haslam & Pedersen, 2007; Nickerson & Louis, 2008). It is also possible that individuals respond not only to current and changing norms, but also to perceptions of change on even higher levels of abstraction. For example, opponents of the new conservatives could be energized by perceptions that the rate of increasing conservatism is slowing, suggesting a movement that may be peaking with a possible

turn of the political tide ahead. Future research could measure authoritarianism, norms of dissent, national identification, and perceptions of the rate of change directly, to test these theoretically plausible underlying processes.

As foreshadowed in the introduction this article views the public outspokenness and engagement of opponents as more strategic; as part of a political attempt to achieve group goals and increase its status (Abrams, Marques, Bown, & Dougill, 2002; Moscovici, 1991; Shamir, 1987). Resistance to the norm of Australian hostility to Asian immigration could be seen as dysfunctional for Australians because it impairs the consensus of the group and its ability to defend against a perceived threat (Asian immigrants) with exclusionary measures (Blainey, 1984; Buchanan, 1976). However, opponents' resistance may also be a functional attempt to address inconsistencies between such a norm and other Australian values (Iyer et al., 2007; Packer, 2008) or the potential for significant costs to the group and missed benefits (Louis, Taylor, & Douglas, 2005). Dissent by insiders may liberate other in-group members from erroneous norms (e.g., Janis, 1972) and result in acceptance of the need for change by others (Hornsey, 2006). In this sense, the present study adds to a small but growing body of research addressing conditions in which the spiral of silence is broken and the voices of dissent are heard.

More concretely, the study speaks to the importance of considering perceptions of change in opinion norms as well as current levels of public opinion. Consistent with the social identity literature, which has shown differential effects of measures of perceived status now and perceived stability of the status relationship (e.g., Johnson et al., 2005; Louis et al., 2007), distinct effects emerged for perceptions of the current normative environment and of the changing normative climate. New conservatives were threatened by Asian foreigners and motivated to conform to current Australian in-group norms in favor of exclusionary measures. The political opponents of the new conservative movement, in contrast, were mobilized by the perception of increasing conservatism to act, appearing to react to a threat to an opinion group identity as a supporter of Asian immigration (see Bliuc et al., 2008). A political identity (e.g., as a Labor party voter) may also have been made salient; however, the underlying processes cannot be distinguished in the present data. Future research should measure national, opinion group, and political identities and norms in terms of both the status quo and the changing milieu. This differentiation would allow researchers to tease apart processes of disidentification and asymmetries in the level at which individuals are identifying as a function of the changing political context.

Directions for Future Research

The present research benefited from a large community sample, which allowed us to test theoretical models in the field, in a real political context. Moreover, the large sample allowed us to test some theoretically expected and socially interesting

interactions, demonstrating that perceived threat interacted with own opinion and perceived public opinion, tending to decrease responsiveness to in-group members' views. The shape of this interaction was unexpected however: we might also have found increased responsiveness to group norms at high threat (e.g., Abrams et al., 2002). Future research should aim to replicate this interaction and study its underlying properties. For example, are those who perceive a stronger out-group threat reacting to a different set of norms? Because high-threat new conservatives and opponents both showed moderate involvement in the debate, and high-threat supporters showed only moderately high willingness to speak out, ceiling effects cannot explain the lack of responsiveness. Instead, it appears that high-threat participants are showing a degree of guardedness, clustering at the midpoint of the scale in their responses. Group-identification measures, not included in the present study, would probably cast light on this attenuated responsiveness (cf., Packer, 2008). Future research measuring identification with Australia as well as human identification (e.g., Haslam, 2006; Nickerson & Louis, 2008) and other political identities and norms would be valuable here.

The primary weakness associated with the analyses is that they were correlational, and thus the direction of causality is open to question. For example, we have interpreted the results as showing that opponents of the new conservatives who had more supportive attitudes were more involved and willing to speak out. It would be consistent with past research on commitment and on the polarizing effects of public debate if the stronger attitudes were themselves in part a function of engagement in public controversy. Future research should include past behavior as a measured variable where possible, and ideally demonstrate the direct and interactive effects of threat, public opinion, and own attitudes using experimental methods so that the direction of causality can be assessed. Moreover, some of the effects are not consistent across the two dependent variables and some of the effects that seem to differ across supporters and opponents do not do so reliably (e.g., in both cases, the gender effect that male supporters of the new conservatives are more willing to speak out—see Table 2). The use of single-item measures may have introduced instability. If so, pragmatic concerns (i.e., cost) may need to be balanced in future research with more lengthy but reliable measures.

Similarly, a single-item measure of political stance, measuring support for a politician (e.g., Pauline Hanson) could be replaced with a multi-item measure. An attitude measure associated with a controversial politician, however, is useful because it is indirect rather than explicit and because respondents may not always identify with terms such as conservative or right wing (e.g., the Liberal party in Australia represents socially conservative views). Nevertheless, Pauline Hanson has suffered tremendous political vicissitudes, as noted above, and some new conservatives might repudiate her personally even though they embrace her views, or vice versa. If this is true, the results of the study would be even stronger using

a direct, multi-item measure asking participants if they supported the new social conservative movement and avoiding personalized references to Hanson.

At a broader level, it is of interest to reflect on the generalizability of the results beyond the Australian context of the present study. From a theoretical perspective, we see no reason to doubt that the results would generalize to other contexts. Anecdotally the dynamics of new conservatives' engagement—increasing involvement and public outspokenness motivated by threat and a sense of the tide turning in their favor—does seem to have been widespread in the first years of the 21st century around the world. Moreover, politicians will surely continue to use opposition to immigration as a lightning rod to transform social conservatives' discontent into political energy. The public profiles of individuals such as Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, and Joerg Haider in Austria will motivate others to use immigration as their political wedge. Empirical studies that test the current model in other political and cultural contexts would be a valuable direction to address in future research.

However, hostility to immigrants has also been shown to have different antecedents across different national contexts. Nations with higher perceived economic and criminal threat posed by immigrants show a stronger predictive role for authoritarianism, for example, whereas nations with more immigrant unemployment show a stronger role for social dominance orientation (Cohrs & Stelzl, this issue). Nations in which an ethnic definition of nationality is endorsed show a positive predictive role for national identification, whereas when a civic definition is endorsed national identification typically bears a zero or even negative relationship to anti-immigrant sentiment (Pehrson & Green, this issue). Context is thus critical in moderating the functionality and meaning of pro- or anti-immigration debates. For our research, it is worth noting particularly that the moderating effects of threat might change shape as the degree of threat increased more markedly. For example, if there really were an Asian army moving toward northern Australia in preparation for an invasion (as in World War II), one might expect ceiling effects for involvement and outspokenness to appear! Similarly, in nondemocratic societies, where public opinion is expected to carry less weight politically and dissenters are subject to real threats of reprisal from government or religious authorities, quite different responses to changing or dominant attitudes among the wider society could be expected. Relatedly, it should be noted that the present research involved self-report measures of relatively individualistic political actions (speaking out on the debate, getting involved). All other things being equal, we would expect that observed and collective political actions would show similar patterns, but of course political power/oppression and other contextual variables should moderate the relationship between motivation and ability to enact political views and coordinate collectively.

Conclusions

Our results contribute to an understanding of the dynamics of political involvement and public outspokenness at times of social change. They emphasize differences between the sides not only in terms of personal views on the debate surrounding immigration, but also in terms of beliefs about the strength of public opinion on this issue and how it is changing. Although the side whose perspective is gaining ground can be motivated to speak out by a perception of (increased) public support for their position (Noelle-Neumann, 1993), the importance of public support for opinion expression is moderated by one's own political opinion and by specific contextual factors such as identity threat. In particular, this study points to the effectiveness of Australian social conservatives' "identity politics" in which political involvement among supporters was clearly motivated by a rhetoric of threat to group identity from feared Others. However, our results also suggest that people may feel a need to speak out when they perceive that their views are losing ground, providing evidence for active resistance rather than a spiral of silence on the part of the losing side.

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