

Identity Complexity and Inclusiveness Encourage EU citizens' interests in EU-wide Behaviors by Reducing Concerns over Immigration and Increasing General Life Optimism

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Background

- Concerns over immigration have dominated the political and media discourse over EU effectiveness.
- Abundant social psychological research demonstrates that intergroup anxiety, concerns, and threats surrounding relationships with those we perceive as 'others' contribute to intergroup bias, anti-immigrant attitudes, and dis-endorsement of multi-culturalism (see Paolini, Harris, & Griffin, 2016; Stephan, 2014 for reviews).
- Instead, the lessening of these anxieties and perceived threats brings about pro-social orientations, improved intergroup relations, and increased social capital (Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, 2014; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008).
- Intergroup variables and more general psychological processes might underpin individuals' openness to 'otherness' (see Stürmer et al., 2013)

EU Member States

Table 1. EU Member States and Sample Size.

State	EU Member	N
Belgium	EU 9	1,012
Denmark	EU 9	1,008
Germany	EU 9	1,576
France	EU 9	1,004
Ireland	EU 9	1,003
Italy	EU 9	1,036
Luxembourg	EU 9	506
Netherlands	EU 9	1,016
Great Britain	EU 9	1,065
Greece	EU 28	1,017
Spain	EU 28	1,033
Portugal	EU 28	1,075
Austria	EU 28	1,000
Sweden	EU 28	1,008
Finland	EU 28	1,012
Cyprus	EU 28	500
Czech Republic	EU 28	1,011
Estonia	EU 28	1,031
Hungary	EU 28	1,087
Latvia	EU 28	1,012
Lithuania	EU 28	1,015
Malta	EU 28	504
Poland	EU 28	1,001
Slovakia	EU 28	1,024
Slovenia	EU 28	1,043
Bulgaria	EU 28	1,074
Romania	EU 28	1,012
Croatia	EU 28	1,003

Note. EU9 entered the EU by 1973;
EU28 entered by 2013.

N = sample size in 2014 Eurobarometer data.

Aims

- Test whether complexity and inclusiveness of national and European identities mitigate the salience of intergroup concerns in Europe – including those associated with immigration – and increase individuals' general optimism about the future
- Test whether intergroup concerns and optimism mediate the relationships between identity complexity and inclusiveness and interest in behaviours conducive to European integration.

Participants

European adult citizens ($N = 16,092$; females 53.6%; age $M = 48.00$, $SD = 17.83$) residing in one of the 28 EU member states completed the 2014 Eurobarometer survey (Standard EB 81, 2014) and contributed to our key analyses.

Measures

Table 2. Indices Computed Using Eurobarometer Items and Descriptives

Index Created	M (SD) Min/Max	Eurobarometer Assessment and Example Items
Identity Complexity	1.65 (.48)	No national or EU identity selected < one (national or EU) < two (national + EU) identities selected
Identity Inclusiveness	1.74 (.64)	National only selected < national followed by European < European followed by national < European identity only
Intergroup Concerns	.36 (.54)	Immigration, terrorism, crime, or pension chosen as two most important issues facing the EU
General Optimism	2.19 (.60)	General life expectations for the next 12 months (worse; same; better)
Interest in EU-wide Behaviours	4.42 (2.19)	Interests weighted from most to least accessible (e.g., buying goods in another EU country vs. living in another EU country etc.)

Analyses

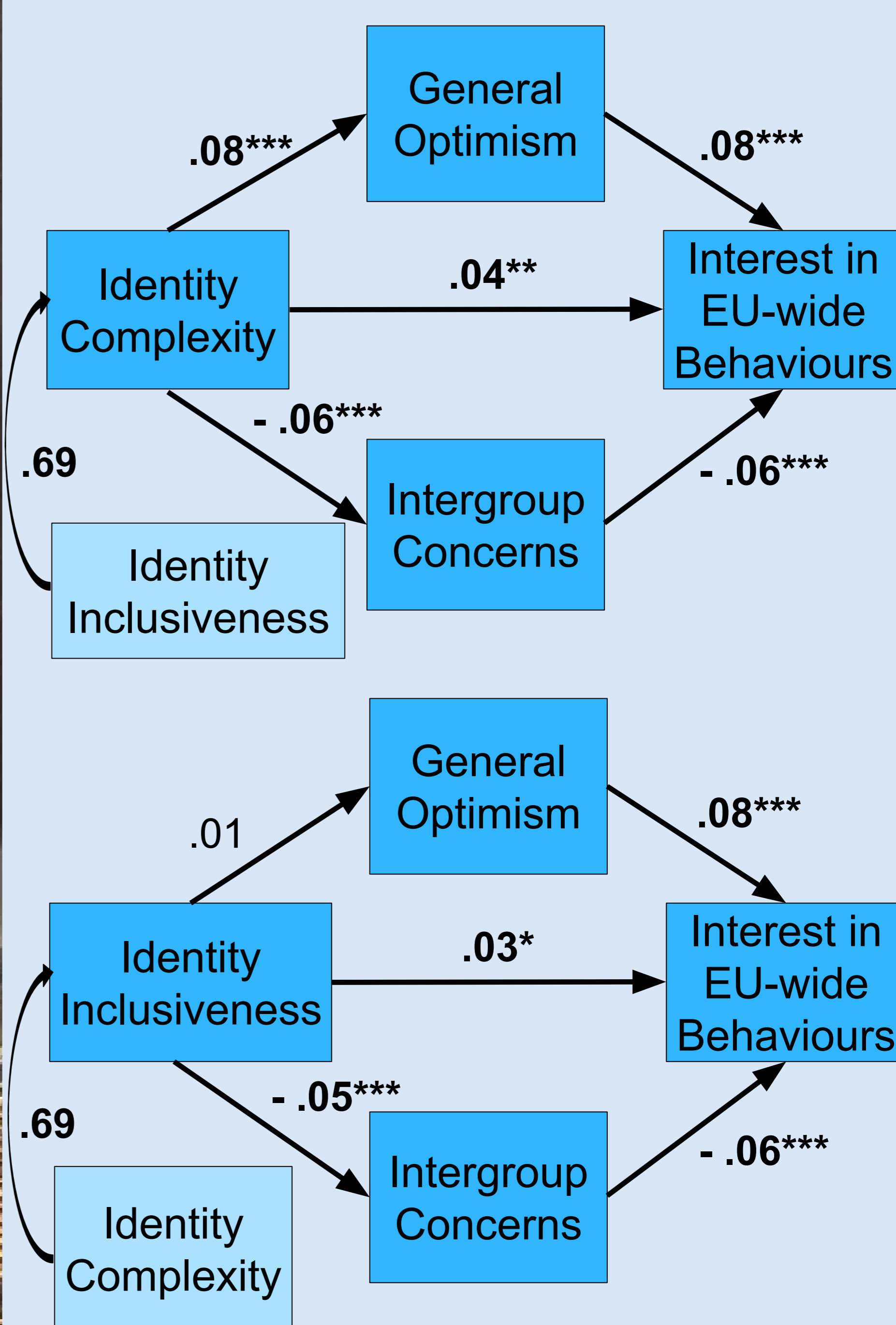
Hayes' (2016) bootstrapped mediation (Model 4) with PROCESS macro (v2.15).

Acknowledgements

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Results

- Although highly correlated (.76), identity complexity and identity inclusiveness *uniquely* predicted interest in EU-wide behaviors.
- Reduced intergroup concerns mediated the identity complexity-EU interest relation ($b = .004$, $SE = .001$, 95% CI [.002, .006]); and the identity inclusiveness-EU interest relation ($b = .003$, $SE = .001$, 95% CI [.002, .005]).
- General optimism mediated only the identity complexity-EU interest relation ($b = .007$, $SE = .001$, 95% CI [.004, .006]).
- Limited variance in mediators and outcome explained by the model ($R^2 = 1-3\%$).



Note. Coefficients are standardized betas.

Discussion

- Identity complexity and inclusiveness support interest in behaviours conducive to EU integration through reduced concerns about threats posed by 'the other' and, to some degree, increased life optimism.
- Additional pathways need unveiling.
- Future research needs to identify best routes to the development of identity complexity and inclusiveness.

References

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