

Integration or isolation: Social identity threat relates to immigrant students' sense of belonging and social approach motivation in the academic context

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Abstract

Stigmatized individuals often feel threatened by negative stereotypes about their group. Previous research showed that concerns about being negatively stereotyped (i.e., social identity threat) have detrimental effects on performance in the stereotyped domain. Little research has focused on interpersonal consequences of negative stereotypes, despite their essential role for integration of stigmatized groups like immigrants. The current work examines the relations of social identity threat with sense of belonging and social approach motivation in immigrant university students, and the moderating effect of ethnic and national identity. Two studies with immigrant university students in Norway (total sample $N = 252$) showed that concerns about being negatively stereotyped at university were negatively associated with immigrant students' sense of belonging to university which in turn related to lower social approach motivation toward other students. Further, social approach motivation predicted students' behavioral intentions to approach social events. There was

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also first evidence for a moderating effect of ethnic and national identity on the relationship between social identity threat and sense of belonging. Practical implications for immigrants' societal and educational integration are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The number of people migrating worldwide has increased since 2005 and this trend persists due to ongoing humanitarian and climate-related crises (United Nations, 2019). For example, in Norway, about 18.5% of the population are immigrants or immigrants' children born in Norway (SSB, 2021c). The integration of immigrants is considered one of the main challenges of the 21st century (Deaux & Verkuyten, 2014). Researchers and policy makers alike have argued that the integration of immigrants heavily relies on the attainment of higher education because academic achievement is important for sociocultural adaptation and skill acquisition (e.g., Ward & Kennedy, 1996). Thus, integration can be defined as immigrants having equal opportunities as native residents to participate in central societal domains like the educational system and the labor market (OECD/European Union, 2015). At the same time, immigrants are notably underrepresented in higher education institutions. In the EU on average, only one in five immigrants has any form of higher education compared to one in four of the host-country natives (OECD/European Union, 2015, p. 318).

The underrepresentation of immigrants in many societal domains and particularly in institutions of higher education is paired with the stigmatization of this group in many European countries (Wilkes & Wu, 2019). Stigmatization based on being a member of a social category that is devalued within a given context often goes along with facing negative stereotypes and subtle or blatant forms of discrimination (Crocker et al., 1998; Link & Phelan, 2001; Major et al., 1998). Earlier research showed that negative stereotypes about immigrants are widespread in many European countries (Froehlich & Schulte, 2019; Froehlich et al., 2016; Ware, 2015) including Norway (Bye et al., 2014). The socially shared negative stereotypes about members of stigmatized groups can have a broad range of detrimental consequences. For example, feeling threatened by negative stereotypes can reduce performance, identification with the stereotyped domain, and sense of belonging to the relevant domain (e.g., Pennington et al., 2016; Spencer et al., 2016; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Thoman et al., 2013; Walton & Cohen, 2007). In the present work, we shift the focus to an important, yet understudied topic; namely, the interpersonal consequences of social stigma due to negative stereotypes. This approach is in line with Goffman (1963), who argued early on that social stigma needs to be conceptualized within social interactions and not as an attribute per se. Social stigma can be understood as an interaction between a target and a perceiver of the stigma: in a certain context, the target of the stigma possesses a particular attribute that is devalued by the perceiver (for the same argument see Doyle & Barreto, *this issue*). Therefore, in the present work, we investigate how social stigma can shape social relationships by focusing on consequences of experiencing social identity threat for immigrant students' social motivation in higher education institutions. We expect that concerns about being negatively stereotyped at university are associated with a reduced sense of belonging to the institution, which in turn is related to a reduced motivation to initiate and maintain positive social

relationships with other students (i.e., social approach motivation). In addition, we investigate whether this effect is moderated by immigrant students' strength of identification with the host society (i.e., national identity) and their culture of origin (i.e., ethnic identity).

Social identity threat and social approach motivation

In the tradition of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), facing negative stereotypes has been understood as a form of social identity threat. This is the case because negative stereotypes threaten humans' core motivation to strive for and maintain a positive social identity (e.g., Steele et al., 2002). When confronted with negative stereotypes about one's group, social identity threat is experienced as a form of psychological discomfort (Aronson & McGlone, 2009). Past research on the classic stereotype threat effect applied this more general notion of social identity threat to the academic domain and investigated its situational effect by experimentally manipulating the salience of stereotypes. These studies showed decreased performance by negatively stereotyped group members in standardized tests when stereotypes were activated compared to control conditions (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Subsequently, it was found that social identity threat can have a broad range of further negative consequences beyond standardized test performance.

In the present work, we focus on interpersonal consequences of negative stereotypes for stigmatized individuals. More precisely, reflecting a basic motivational orientation toward forming social relationships, we examine whether concerns about being negatively stereotyped affect stigmatized group members' social approach motivation. The universal human need for social belonging and satisfying relationships is reflected in two motivational orientations—social approach and social avoidance motivation (e.g., Nikitin & Schoch, 2021). Whereas social avoidance motivation describes the motivation to avoid negative social outcomes (i.e., fear of rejection), social approach motivation is defined as the motivation to approach positive social outcomes (i.e., hope for affiliation; Elliot et al., 2006). The latter motivation has been shown to be beneficial for establishing and maintaining positive relationships (Gable & Berkman, 2008; Nikitin & Schoch, 2021) and has been associated with less loneliness and more satisfaction with social bonds (Gable, 2008; Nikitin & Freund, 2017).

Strong social approach motivation should be crucial for (immigrant) university students' integration into the educational domain. Attending university is a critical period for young adults, as they have often only recently moved out from their parents' home and therefore heavily rely on relationships with peers (Thurber & Walton, 2012). In young adulthood forming new social relationships is a very important motive and social approach motivation has an especially important function in the transitional phase into adulthood (Nikitin & Freund, 2008, 2017). Therefore, in this period establishing and maintaining positive relationships is particularly important. In line with this argument, empirical evidence shows that positive peer relationships are essential for university students' well-being and performance. For example, having close relationships with college friends was associated with first-year students' higher academic, social, and emotional adjustment to college (Swenson et al., 2008) and social relationships were associated with students' academic achievement and well-being (van der Zanden et al., 2018). Further, social relationships have also been shown to be beneficial for immigrant students' college adjustment (e.g., Kim, 2009; Teja & Schonert-Reichl, 2013).

Recent studies have found first empirical support for the negative relationship between social identity threat and social approach motivation for members of negatively stereotyped groups (Martiny & Nikitin, 2019; Rahn et al., 2021). In detail, three experimental and one correlational

study showed that activating negative gender stereotypes in mathematics at university decreased female university students' social approach motivation (i.e., female students were less motivated to approach positive interactions with other university students). This relationship was mediated by a reduced sense of belonging to university (Martiny & Nikitin, 2019). Thus, being reminded of a negative stereotype in relation to one's social identity in a specific domain ("women are bad at math") caused female students to feel like they do not belong in the domain (i.e., university), which made them less likely to approach others related to the domain (i.e., fellow students). In addition, work by Rahn et al. (2021) tested similar hypotheses with older adults and found that internalized negative age stereotypes of older employees were related to lower levels of social approach motivation toward co-workers via reduced sense of belonging in the workplace. Taken together, first empirical evidence suggests that concerns about negative stereotypes about one's stigmatized in-group can lead to reduced social approach motivation via a reduced sense of belonging to the institution. In the current research, we extend this previous research on social identity threat and social approach motivation by investigating a further outcome more proximal to actual social behavior: behavioral intentions to participate in social events in the stereotyped domain. We expect that sense of belonging and social approach motivation sequentially mediate the relationship of perceived social identity threat and behavioral intentions. By investigating behavioral intentions as an additional outcome, we aimed to highlight the role of social approach motivation in forming intentions toward positive social behavior of initiating and maintaining social relationships, as social approach motivation is an antecedent of positive social relationships (e.g., Nikitin & Schoch, 2021).

Sense of belonging as a mediating variable

It has been argued that social identity threat can reduce social approach motivation and that a reduced sense of belonging to the domain is a crucial mediator of this relationship (Martiny & Nikitin, 2019). Sense of belonging to the academic context reflects the expected likelihood of attaining positive social outcomes (Geen, 1991). If this likelihood is perceived as lower due to social identity threat and related feelings of not belonging to the academic domain, the motivation to approach positive social outcomes with peers in the academic domain should consequently be impaired. In turn, this impaired social approach motivation would diminish stigmatized students' peer relationships and consequently further contribute to their academic underperformance.

Individuals belonging to a stigmatized group may feel a decreased sense of social belonging in domains like work and school because stereotyping is more frequent in such settings. Further, stigmatized individuals may interpret their experiences of social identity threat as indicating that they do not belong to the relevant domain or the people associated with it (Walton & Cohen, 2011). Sense of belonging is a crucial variable predicting academic motivation and achievement. Interventions targeted at reducing belonging uncertainty can alleviate the consequences of social identity threat (e.g., Walton et al., 2012; Walton & Cohen, 2007, 2011). In line with this, non-White (but not White) students who were led to believe that they had few friends in academia reported a significant decrease in sense of belonging (Walton & Cohen, 2007). Furthermore, non-White participants' sense of belonging to a virtual world was lower when they viewed predominantly White avatar profiles compared to racially diverse ones (Lee & Park, 2011). Finally, high school students from marginalized ethnic minority groups experienced reduced sense of belonging to their school when their racial identity was made salient (Mello et al., 2012).

Taken together, earlier research shows that concerns about being negatively stereotyped both in general and in educational institutions in particular can reduce stigmatized group members' sense of belonging to the institution. In turn, reduced sense of belonging is associated with negative academic outcomes for stigmatized students. We argue that reduced sense of belonging can also negatively affect the social relationships of stigmatized students.

The role of multiple social identities

When investigating consequences of stigma and negative stereotypes for immigrant students in Europe, it needs to be taken into consideration that immigrants often identify not only with one ethnic group (e.g., their country of origin), but possess multiple social identities (e.g., Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Benet-Martínez & Hong, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). This means that they often identify with at least two groups: their culture of origin (e.g., Kurds—termed ethnic identity) and the host society (e.g., Norwegians—termed national identity; Fleischmann & Verkuyten, 2016). Earlier research showed that young immigrants in both Germany and Norway tended to report higher levels of ethnic than national identity, and that these two identities were negatively related (Froehlich et al., 2020; Martiny et al., 2017, 2020). The negative relationship was more pronounced for negatively stereotyped immigrant groups or in contexts with high ethnic discrimination and low ethnic diversity (Froehlich et al., 2020; Kende et al., 2021; Martiny et al., 2017, 2020). This means that negative stereotypes might hinder a successful integration of immigrants' multiple social identities which in turn can make it more difficult for immigrants to develop a strong and secure national identity (e.g., Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Hirsh & Kang, 2016). This is particularly problematic as national identity has been linked to educational success (Berry, 1997; Kiang et al., 2008; Nekby et al., 2009), school performance (Hannover et al., 2013), and successful integration in the host society (Froehlich et al., 2020; Martiny et al., 2017, 2020). In terms of the acculturation framework by Berry (1997), a simultaneous orientation toward both the ethnic group of origin and the host society (i.e., acculturation strategy of integration) is most beneficial for academic success and adaptation (e.g., Phalet & Baysu, 2020; Preusche & Göbel, 2022). A strong identification with the negatively stereotyped group has been shown to aggravate the effects of social identity threat (e.g., Schmader, 2002). In contrast, intervention studies showed that when a non-stereotyped social identity (e.g., being a college student) was activated, this alleviated social identity threat (e.g., Rydell et al., 2009). In the context of multiple social identities, the relevance of the interplay of these identities for sense of belonging and social approach motivation of immigrant students remains an open question. Thus, the current research investigates individual differences in the vulnerability to experience negative consequences of perceived social identity threat for sense of belonging depending on the strength of ethnic and national identification.

Kiang et al. (2008) argued that a simultaneous strong national and ethnic identity (i.e., integrated multiple identities) may act as a protective buffer against the negative effect of the discrimination these stigmatized groups often experience. We therefore propose that the consequences of social identity threat for sense of belonging are moderated by the strength of immigrants' ethnic and national identity. In particular, we predict that integrated multiple social identities (i.e., a strong ethnic and a strong national identity) buffer against the negative relationship between social identity threat and sense of belonging for immigrant students in higher education. It should be noted that Baysu and Phalet (2019) proposed a different line of argumentation focusing on performance as the central outcome; they argued that integrated multiple identities would be beneficial for minority performance in low-threat, but not in high-threat

academic contexts. In two field experiments with minority students in the school context, they showed that students endorsing multiple social identities showed higher anxiety and lower performance under stereotype threat. The authors reasoned that this can be explained by the fact that students endorsing multiple social identities are simultaneously the target of the threat (a member of the stigmatized group) and the source of the threat (by feeling close to the non-stigmatized national group which endorses the negative stereotype).

The current study extends this research to the social domain, as previous research (Martiny & Nikitin, 2019) has shown the central mediating role of sense of belonging for the consequences of social identity threat in this domain. For the motivation to initiate and maintain positive peer relations in the academic domain as the central outcome, we therefore hypothesize that dual identification has a buffering rather than an impairing effect, as individuals who identify with the ethnic and the national group should be less vulnerable to the social consequences of stereotype threat. Research on social identities and ethnic homophily in social relationships has shown that people tend to befriend others with similar social identities (e.g., Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954), as these identities reflect similar beliefs, norms, and values (e.g., Deaux & Martin, 2003; McFarland & Pals, 2005). In line with this, immigrant students with dual identities were equally likely to befriend ethnic minority and ethnic majority peers (Jugert et al., 2018; Leszczensky et al., 2019). Consequently, we argue that dual identification opens up possibilities to feel closeness and belonging to ethnic minority and majority peers at the academic institution. Ethnic majority peers are thus not only seen as the source of social identity threat, but also as potential ingroup members and friends by dual identifiers.

The present research

In order to empirically examine the questions outlined above, we measured immigrant students' experience of social identity threat at their educational institutions. When investigating effects of social identity threat, different types of threats might occur for different stigmatized groups in different situations. The Multi-Threat Framework proposed by Shapiro and Neuberg (2007) specifies six different types of social identity threat defined by their intersection on two dimensions: the source of the threat (oneself, the outgroup, or one's ingroup) and the target of the threat (oneself or one's group). In the present work, we focus on the group as the target of the threat, as we believe that worrying about confirming negative stereotypes about one's group is of uppermost importance for the social relationships of stigmatized individuals, because this component of social identity threat closely aligns with our conceptualization of stigma as belonging to a negatively stereotyped social group. Similarly, we focus on both the self and the outgroup as the sources of threat. This is because we believe that for engaging in social relationships in the academic domain, it is most relevant whether stigmatized individuals worry about confirming stereotypes in their own minds or in the minds of outgroup members (i.e., majority students, who might be regarded as the perceiver of the stigma). Therefore, we included two subscales to measure social identity threat: The "group-concept threat" subscale that measures individuals' fear that their behavior will confirm the stereotype about their group in their own mind, and the "group-reputation threat" subscale that measures individuals' fear that their behavior will confirm the stereotype about their group in the minds of outgroup members. We explore whether effects are similar for both subscales of social identity threat. Preregistrations of hypotheses, materials, data, and analysis outputs can be found on the Open Science Framework (OSF) [<https://osf.io/wrf64/>].

We conducted two separate cross-sectional data collections with university students with migration background in Norway. The pre-registered hypotheses and measures were very similar in both studies. Study 2 was conducted to complement the insufficient sample size of Study 1. To increase test power, in the following we present combined analyses for both studies while controlling for sample (Study 1 vs. 2) in the analyses. As an additional robustness check of results across studies, we conducted multiple-group comparisons of models for the separate studies. We tested the following pre-registered hypotheses¹ (for the preregistrations see: <https://osf.io/wrf64/>): *H1*) The more social identity threat immigrant students experience at university, the lower is their social approach motivation toward other university students. *H2*) The relationship between social identity threat and social approach motivation is mediated by a reduced sense of belonging to university. *H3*) Reduced social approach motivation is associated with immigrant students' lower intention to join events in which they can meet and positively interact with other students. *H4*) The interplay of ethnic and national identity moderates the relationship between social identity threat and sense of belonging. Students with strong ethnic and strong national identity do not show a negative relationship between social identity threat and sense of belonging. *H4* was pre-registered as exploratory in Study 1 and as confirmatory in Study 2. The studies were approved by the NSD (Norwegian Center for Research Data; Ref no. Study 1: 522395; Study 2: 276005) and the board of research ethics of the last author's institution.

METHOD

Participants

For Study 1, a sample size of $N = 120$ was preregistered based on the effect sizes from previous studies (Martiny & Nikitin, 2019; Rahn et al., 2021). One hundred and eighty students at Norwegian universities were recruited online. Eighty-three of these participants were excluded from analysis due to not fulfilling the preregistered inclusion criterion of having an immigrant background ($n = 16$), or not completing the full survey ($n = 67$, of which 64 completed less than 50% of the survey and had missing data on all outcome variables).² Of the remaining 97 participants, 64 (66%) were female and 33 (33%) were male. Age was measured by choosing an age category. Using the mean of these age categories, the average age of all participants was 25.95 years ($SD = 6.82$). The majority of the sample (58%) were first-generation immigrants, whereas 42% were second- or third-generation immigrants (parents or grandparents immigrated to Norway). Although after exclusions the pre-registered target sample size of $N = 120$ was not reached, data collection was terminated after 3 months, as the study was part of a student thesis with a fixed interval of data collection.

For Study 2, a Monte Carlo-based a-priori power analysis (Schoemann et al., 2017) based on the effect sizes of Study 1 resulted in a required sample size of $N = 133$ (simple mediation) and $N = 153$ (sequential mediation) with a test power of .95. One-hundred-and-fifty-five participants were recruited for Study 2 (age $M = 24.52$ years, $SD = 5.68$). No participants were excluded from the

¹ The preregistration for this study was finalized before the data were analyzed and a project on OSF was set up. However, due to a misunderstanding within the research team, the preregistration for this study was unfortunately not uploaded on the OSF prior to data analysis. We now provide it on the OSF.

² The second exclusion criterion was not included in the preregistration but was included so that the Study 1 data would have identical exclusion criteria to Study 2, in which this criterion was preregistered.

analyses. This was due to the fact that in the beginning of the online survey for Study 2 participants were presented with questions about the pre-registered inclusion criteria. The survey was automatically terminated if the participants did not meet all criteria and only complete responses were recorded. The gender distribution was similar to Study 1 (109 women, 45 men, 1 missing). The majority (53%) of the participants were second-generation immigrants, whereas 39% were first-generation and the remaining 7% were third-generation immigrants (1 missing).

The combined sample consisted of 252 students (173 female, 78 male, 1 missing). Approximately, half of the sample ($n = 117$, 47%) were first-generation immigrants, whereas the other half ($n = 134$, 53%, 1 missing) were second- or third-generation immigrants. We further aimed to ensure that our sample consisted of Norwegian students with migration background and not of international students studying at Norwegian universities. We believe that we succeeded in recruiting students with migration background, as the vast majority of participants reported living in Norway for more than 10 years or being born in Norway ($n = 191$, 76%). Moreover, participants intended to stay in Norway after their education (Study 1: “How likely is it that you will live in Norway after your education?”, 1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely, $M = 6.32$, $SD = 1.24$; “How likely are you to move to the country you or your family immigrated from?” $M = 2.10$, $SD = 1.71$; Study 2: “Are you planning to live in Norway after you have completed your education?” yes [67%], very likely [28%], very unlikely [2%], no [1%], 1 missing).

Procedure

Study 1 was conducted between October 2019 and January 2020, Study 2 between February and March 2021. Participants were recruited via student e-mailing lists at several Norwegian universities, social media posts, and flyers by providing them with a link to the online survey. The topic of the survey was introduced as immigrant students’ perception of the social climate at their university. Participants were informed that they were eligible to participate if (a) they were 18 years or older, (b) they were a first-, second- or third-generation immigrant, (c) lived in Norway for at least 2 years, and (d) were students at a higher education institution. Prospective participants were presented with information about the study and when they chose to participate (by clicking on the link), they first saw the consent form which informed them about data protection and their rights as participants in accordance with Norwegian national data protection regulations and research ethics guidelines of the American Psychological Association. After providing written consent, participants were presented with all measures. The scales were presented in a fixed order with demographic questions at the end. Finally, participants were debriefed and asked if they consented to their data being used. They also had the opportunity to join a lottery (three gift cards in a value of 500 NOK, 55 USD). The survey took approximately 20 min to complete.

Materials

The survey consisted of multiple measures administered in an online questionnaire using Qualtrics. The questionnaire was administered to participants in Norwegian. All original items in Norwegian and their English translation can be found in the [Supplemental Materials](#). All following measures, with the exception of demographics, were measured using a 7-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating higher agreement with the construct being measured.

Perceived social identity threat. The key predictor variable was measured using two subscales from the stereotype threat scale (Shapiro, 2012) that were adapted to an immigrant student population. The first subscale assessed group-concept threat (four items, e.g., “At university, I am worried that I will confirm stereotypes about immigrants”; Study 1: Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$, Study 2: $\alpha = .87$). The second subscale assessed group-reputation threat (four items, e.g., “As an immigrant at university, others expect that I will perform poorly”; Study 1: $\alpha = .85$, Study 2: $\alpha = .76$).

Social approach motivation. The main outcome variable was measured using four items from the social approach motivation scale (Martiny & Nikitin, 2019, adapted from Elliot et al., 2006). The items measured participants’ motivation to approach other students (e.g., “I try to share many fun and meaningful experiences with other students”; Study 1: $\alpha = .82$, Study 2: $\alpha = .92$).

Sense of belonging. The proposed mediator was measured using eight items adapted from both the sense of belonging to university scale (Good et al., 2012) and the measure of sense of belonging (Hagerty & Patusky, 1995). All items assessed participants’ sense of belonging to university (e.g., “I feel like I belong at university”; Study 1: $\alpha = .93$, Study 2: $\alpha = .95$).

Behavioral intentions. The secondary outcome was assessed using a scale developed by the research team aimed to measure students’ intentions to seek contact with other students by joining events in which other students were present (eight items: “I plan to join an organization to meet other students in the near future,” “I have plans to go out to the town to meet other people in the near future,” “I will contact other students to start/join a study group in the near future,” “I will approach student organizations that are outside cafeterias and university buildings in the near future,” “I plan to do something fun with friends after school in the near future,” “I will volunteer at various events that the university holds in the near future,” and “I plan to join a sports club to meet others in the near future”; Study 1: $\alpha = .82$; Study 2: $\alpha = .89$).

Ethnic and national identity. The proposed moderators were measured using two items used in Martiny et al. (2020) and adapted from Postmes et al. (2013): “I feel Norwegian” and “I feel _____ [ethnic identity].” Participants were instructed to fill in their ethnic identity referring to their ethnic, non-Norwegian background.

Demographics. In addition to gender (male, female, other), age was assessed (Study 1: age categories 18–25 years, 25–35 years, 35–45 years, and over 45 years; Study 2: age in years). Moreover, participants’ immigration generation status was assessed (Study 1: 1st generation = “I migrated to Norway first”; 2nd/3rd generation = “one or both of my parents or grandparents first migrated to Norway,” none = “I am not an immigrant, and none of my parents or grandparents migrated to Norway from a different country”; Study 2 included separate responses for 2nd and 3rd generation), which was also used to identify immigrants in the sample.³

Statistical analyses

To test our hypotheses, we conducted linear regression analysis (H1) as well as conditional process analysis (H2: simple mediation, H3: sequential mediation, H4: moderated mediation) with the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) in IBM SPSS Version 27 using 10,000 Bootstrap samples. In all models, we controlled for sample (Study 1 vs. Study 2). As an additional robustness check, we included immigrant generation (1st vs. 2nd/3rd) as a further control variable. This control

³ In addition, we also collected information on participants’ sense of belonging to their ethnic group, dual identity, dual identity conflict, perceived integration in Norway, amount of contact with Norwegians, and perceived percentage of immigrants on study course. These variables were not used for any analyses according to the preregistration.

variable was included during the review process and was therefore not preregistered. Results with and without controlling for immigrant generation were similar (except for the three-way interaction in the moderated mediation model with group-reputation threat [H4], which was no longer significant ($p = .070$); this might be explained by more restricted test power due to the small group sizes for the control variable in this complex analysis). To further test the robustness of results across studies, we conducted path analyses with multiple-group comparisons in Mplus Version 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). For the simple and sequential mediation models, we compared models where all paths were constrained to be equal between studies with unconstrained models. Model fit did not significantly differ ($4.93 < \chi^2 < 8.26$; $3 < df < 6$; $.261 > p > .107$) and indirect effects also did not differ between studies (Wald test of parameter constraints $< .32$, $p > .572$). Multi-group comparison was not possible for the moderated mediation model due to small sample sizes for the separate studies. Results of the additional models are available on the OSF.

RESULTS

Relation of social identity threat and social approach motivation

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations are depicted in Table 1. To examine H1—the more social identity threat immigrant students experience at university, the lower social approach motivation toward other university students they report—two separate linear regression models were computed with each social identity threat subscale as a predictor and social approach motivation as the outcome. Group-concept threat did not significantly predict social approach motivation ($b = .05$, $SE = .06$, 95%CI $[-.06; .17]$, $p = .313$), but there was an unexpected positive prediction by group-reputation threat ($b = .14$, $SE = .06$, 95%CI $[.03; .24]$, $p = .016$).

Mediation by sense of belonging

To examine H2—the relationship between social identity threat and social approach motivation is mediated by a reduced sense of belonging to university—two separate simple mediation models (PROCESS Model 4) were computed with the two social identity threat subscales as predictor variables, social approach motivation as the outcome, and sense of belonging as the mediator. The first model showed that although there was a positive direct relationship between group-concept threat and social approach motivation ($c' = .17$, $SE = .06$, 95%CI $[.06; .28]$, $p = .002$), there was a negative relationship between group-concept threat and sense of belonging ($a = -.31$, $SE = .05$, 95%CI $[-.41; -.21]$, $p < .001$), and a positive relationship between sense of belonging and social approach motivation ($b = .37$, $SE = .06$, 95%CI $[.24; .50]$, $p < .001$). Further, there was a significant indirect effect of group-concept threat on social approach motivation via reduced sense of belonging ($ab = -.12$, $SE = .03$, 95%CI $[-.18; -.06]$).

A simple mediation model using the group-reputation threat subscale showed that there was again a direct positive relationship between group-reputation threat and social approach motivation ($c' = .30$, $SE = .06$, 95%CI $[.19; .41]$, $p < .001$), a negative relationship between group-reputation threat and sense of belonging ($a = -.37$, $SE = .05$, 95%CI $[-.46; -.26]$, $p < .001$), and a positive relationship between sense of belonging and social approach motivation ($b = .44$, $SE = .06$, 95%CI $[.31; .56]$, $p < .001$). There was also a significant indirect effect of group-reputation threat on social approach motivation via reduced sense of belonging ($ab = -.16$, $SE = .03$, 95%CI $[-.23; -.10]$).

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations (r , [95%CI])

<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
-	2.45 (1.56)	2.89 (1.83)	5.14 (1.43)	5.70 (1.15)	3.84 (1.50)	4.63 (2.09)	4.10 (2.36)
(1) Group-concept threat	2.71 (1.77)	.70*** [.55; .83]	-.43*** [-.60; -.24]	-.05 [-.26; .15]	.01 [-.18; .21]	-.01 [-.23; .21]	-.27** [-.45; -.06]
(2) Group-reputation threat	3.11 (1.57)	.71*** [.61; .79]	-.52*** [-.68; -.33]	.04 [-.17; .24]	.07 [-.14; .28]	.05 [-.17; .24]	-.27** [-.46; -.08]
(3) Sense of belonging	5.08 (1.50)	-.31*** [-.46; -.16]	-.35*** [-.50; -.19]	.26* [.08; .43]	.22* [.10; .40]	-.05 [-.27; .18]	.35*** [.16; .51]
(4) Social approach motivation	5.17 (1.64)	.12 [-.04; .27]	.32*** [.14; .48]	-	.34*** [.16; .50]	-.15 [-.32; .04]	.25* [.06; .44]
(5) Behavioral intentions	3.93 (1.66)	.02 [-.15; .19]	.43*** [.29; .56]	.45*** [.30; .59]	-	.09 [-.11; .28]	.17 [-.03; .36]
(6) Ethnic identity	4.32 (1.94)	.10 [-.07; .27]	-.02 [-.19; .15]	-.16* [-.32; .01]	-.01 [-.18; .15]	-	-.32** [-.53; -.10]
(7) National identity	4.36 (2.06)	-.24** [-.39; -.08]	.43*** [.28; .56]	.21** [.05; .37]	.34*** [.18; .49]	-.26** [-.43; -.08]	-

Notes. Results from Study 1 are depicted above the diagonal, results from Study 2 below the diagonal.

* $p < .05$,

** $p < .01$,

*** $p < .001$.

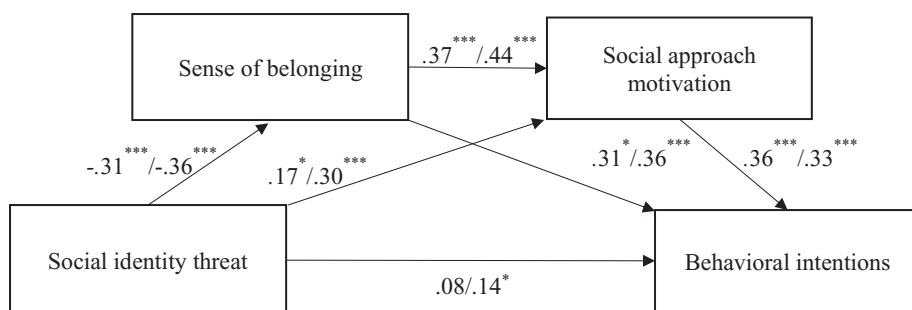


FIGURE 1 Results of the sequential mediation model. The first values represent results of with group-concept threat, the second values represent results with group-reputation threat. Coefficients are unstandardized regression weights. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Behavioral intentions as a further outcome in sequential mediation

To examine H3—reduced social approach motivation is associated with immigrant students' lower intention to join events in which they can meet and positively interact with other students—two sequential bootstrapped mediation models (PROCESS Model 6) were computed using the two threat subscales as predictors, behavioral intentions as the outcome, sense of belonging as mediator 1, and social approach motivation as mediator 2. The first model showed the predicted effects (Table 2 and Figure 1). There was a significant indirect effect of group-concept threat on behavioral intentions via sense of belonging and social approach motivation ($a_1d_2b_2 = -.04$, $SE = .01$, 95%CI $[-.07; -.02]$). This means that group-concept threat was negatively associated with behavioral intentions via reduced sense of belonging and in turn via reduced social approach motivation. The second model replicated these results with the predictor group-reputation threat (Table 3 and Figure 1; $a_1d_2b_2 = -.05$, $SE = .02$, 95%CI $[-.09; -.03]$).

Multiple social identities and moderated mediation

To examine H4—the interplay between national and ethnic identity moderates the relationship between social identity threat and sense of belonging—we computed moderated mediation models (PROCESS Model 11) with the two social identity threat subscales as predictors, social approach motivation as the outcome, sense of belonging as the mediator, and ethnic and national identity as moderators of the path between social identity threat and sense of belonging. All predictors involved in the interactions were mean-centered. In the first model, the hypothesized three-way interaction between group-concept threat, ethnic identity and national identity was non-significant ($a_7 = .01$, $SE = .01$, 95%CI $[-.01; .03]$, $p = .456$; for complete model results, see Table 4).

In the second model, there was a significant three-way interaction between group-reputation threat, ethnic identity, and national identity on sense of belonging ($a_7 = .02$, $SE = .01$, 95%CI $[-.0005; .04]$, $p = .044$; for complete model results see Table 5). Simple slopes analyses (Figure 2) showed that immigrant students with a strong ethnic and a weak national identity showed a negative relationship of group-reputation threat and sense of belonging ($b = -.48$, $SE = .11$, 95%CI $[-.71; -.25]$, $p < .001$). A similar effect was found for students with a weak ethnic and a strong

TABLE 2 Results of sequential mediation model for group-concept threat

		<i>Direct Effects</i>												
		<i>Consequent</i>					<i>Y (Behavioral intentions)</i>							
Antecedent		M1		M2		b [95%CI]	SE	p	c'	b₁	b₂	i_Y	SE	p
		b [95%CI]	SE	p	a₂									
X (Group-concept threat)		<i>a</i> ₁	-.31 [-.41; -.21]	.05	<.001	<i>a</i> ₂	.17 [.06; .28]	.06	.002	<i>c'</i>	.08 [-.03; .20]	.06	.144	
M1 (Sense of belonging)			-	-	-	<i>d</i> ₁₂	.37 [.25; .50]	.06	<.001	<i>b</i> ₁	.32 [.18; .45]	.07	<.001	
M2 (Soc. approach motivation)			-	-	-		-	-	-	<i>b</i> ₂	.36 [.23; .48]	.06	<.001	
Constant		<i>i</i> _{M1}	5.90 [5.53; 6.30]	.19	<.001	<i>i</i> _{M2}	3.37 [2.55; 4.19]	.42	<.001	<i>i</i> _Y	-.02 [-.96; .92]	.48	.966	
			<i>R</i> ² = .13				<i>R</i> ² = .15				<i>R</i> ² = .24			
			<i>F</i> (2, 249) = 18.17, <i>p</i> < .001				<i>F</i> (3, 248) = 14.90, <i>p</i> < .001				<i>F</i> (4, 247) = 19.89, <i>p</i> < .001			
		<i>Indirect Effects</i>												
		b								SE				
Group-concept threat → Sense of belonging → Behavioral intentions														
Group-concept threat → Social approach motivation → Behavioral intentions														
Group-concept threat → Sense of belonging → Social approach motivation → Behavioral intentions														

Note. Confidence intervals are displayed at the 95% level.



TABLE 3 Results of sequential mediation model for group-reputation threat

		<i>Direct Effects</i>										
		<i>Consequent</i>			<i>Y (Behavioral intentions)</i>							
<i>Antecedent</i>		<i>M1</i>		<i>M2</i>		<i>b</i> [95%CI]	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>				
		<i>b</i> [95%CI]	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>a</i> ₂				<i>b</i> [95%CI]	<i>SE</i>		
X (Group-reputation threat)	<i>a</i> ₁	-.37 [-.46; -.26]	.05	<.001	<i>a</i> ₂	.30 [.19; .41]	.06	<.001	<i>c'</i>	.14 [.02; .26]	.06	.023
M1 (Sense of belonging)		-	-	-	<i>d</i> ₁₂	.44 [.32; .56]	.06	<.001	<i>b</i> ₁	.36 [.22; .50]	.07	<.001
M2 (Soc. approach motivation)		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>b</i> ₂	.33 [.19; .46]	.07	<.001
Constant	<i>i</i> _{M1}	6.19 [5.79; 6.59]	.20	<.001	<i>i</i> _{M2}	2.58 [1.72; 3.43]	.44	<.001	<i>i</i> _Y	-.24 [-1.20; .72]	.49	.620
		<i>R</i> ² = .17				<i>R</i> ² = .21				<i>R</i> ² = .25		
		<i>F</i> (2, 249) = 25.54, <i>p</i> < .001				<i>F</i> (3, 248) = 22.19, <i>p</i> < .001				<i>F</i> (4, 247) = 20.83, <i>p</i> < .001		
		<i>Indirect Effects</i>										
	<i>b</i>								<i>SE</i>			
Group-reputation threat → Sense of belonging → Behavioral intentions									.04			
Group-reputation threat → Social approach motivation → Behavioral intentions									.03			
Group-reputation threat → Sense of belonging → Social approach motivation → Behavioral intentions									.02			

Note. Confidence intervals are displayed at the 95% level.

TABLE 4 Results of moderated mediation model for group-concept threat

Antecedent	Consequent			Y (Social approach motivation)				
	M	b [95%CI]	SE	p	b [95%CI]	SE	p	
X (Group-concept threat)	a_1	-.23 [-.33; -.13]	.05	<.001	c'	.17 [.06; .28]	.06	.002
M (Sense of belonging)		-	-	-	b	.37 [.24; .49]	.06	<.001
W (Ethnic ID)	a_2	.07 [-.02; .16]	.05	.134				
Z (National ID)	a_3	.23 [.15; .31]	.04	<.001				
X x W	a_4	.02 [-.03; .06]	.02	.463				
X x Z	a_5	.02 [-.03; .06]	.02	.437				
W x Z	a_6	-.003 [-.04; .03]	.02	.873				
X x W x Z	a_7	.01 [-.01; .03]	.01	.456				
Constant	i_M	5.13 [4.86; 5.41]	.14	<.001	i_Y	3.83 [3.15; 4.53]	.35	<.001
	$R^2 = .24$				$R^2 = .15$			
	$F(8, 242) = 9.33, p < .001$				$F(3, 247) = 14.79, p < .001$			

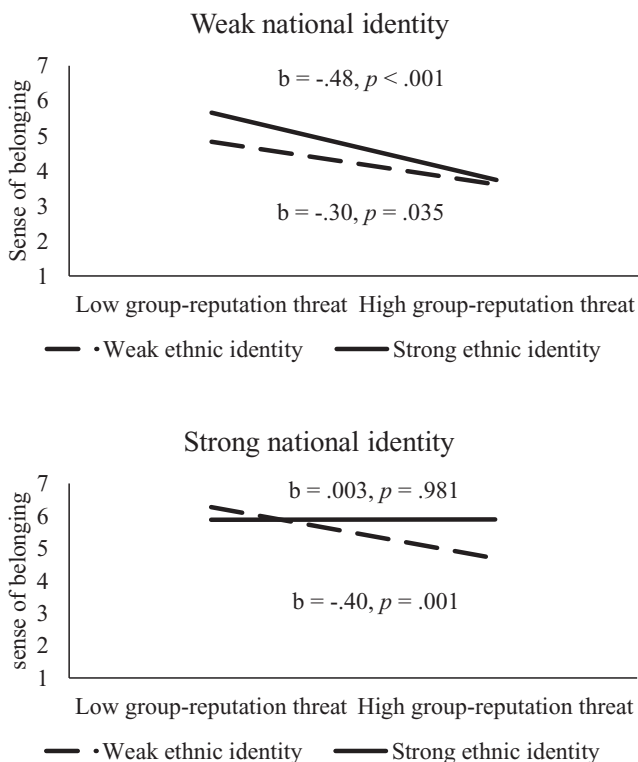
Note. Confidence intervals are displayed at the 95% level.

TABLE 5 Results of moderated mediation model for group-reputation threat

Antecedent	Consequent				Y (Social approach motivation)			
	M	b [95%CI]	SE	p	b [95%CI]	SE	p	p
X (Group-reputation threat)	a_1	-.29 [-.38; -.18]	.05	<.001	c'	.29 [.19; .40]	.06	<.001
M (Sense of belonging)		-	-	-	b	.44 [.31; .56]	.06	<.001
W (Ethnic ID)	a_2	.09 [.003; .17]	.04	.043	-	-	-	-
Z (National ID)	a_3	.21 [.13; .28]	.04	<.001	-	-	-	-
X × W	a_4	.03 [-.02; .07]	.02	.251	-	-	-	-
X × Z	a_5	.03 [-.01; .07]	.02	.158	-	-	-	-
W × Z	a_6	-.002 [-.04; .03]	.02	.909	-	-	-	-
X × W × Z	a_7	.02 [.0005; .04]	.01	.044	-	-	-	-
Constant	i_M	5.17 [4.91; 5.43]	.13	<.001	i_Y	3.49 [2.81; 4.18]	.35	<.001
	$R^2 = .29$				$R^2 = .21$			
	$F(8, 242) = 12.30, p < .001$				$F(3, 247) = 21.72, p < .001$			

Note. Confidence intervals are displayed at the 95% level.

FIGURE 2 Simple slopes for the relationship of group-reputation threat and sense of belonging at different levels of ethnic and national identity



national identity ($b = -.40$, $SE = .12$, 95%CI $[-.64; -.15]$, $p = .001$) as well as for students with a weak ethnic and a weak national identity ($b = -.30$, $SE = .14$, 95%CI $[-.59; -.02]$, $p = .035$). However, as expected, the relationship of group-reputation threat and sense of belonging was non-significant for students with a strong ethnic and a strong national identity ($b = .003$, $SE = .11$, 95%CI $[-.22; .23]$, $p = .981$). The indirect effect of group-reputation threat on social approach motivation via sense of belonging was found only for students with a weak ethnic and a strong national identity ($ab = -.17$, 95%CI $[-.30; -.06]$; $SE = .06$) as well as for students with a weak national and a strong ethnic identity ($ab = -.21$, 95%CI $[-.34; -.10]$, $SE = .06$), but not for the other student groups (weak ethnic and weak national identity: $ab = -.13$, 95%CI $[-.25; .06]$, $SE = .08$; strong ethnic and strong national identity: $ab = .001$, 95%CI $[-.11; .08]$, $SE = .05$). The index of moderated mediation was significant ($.008$, 95%CI $[.0001; .0201]$, $SE = .005$).

DISCUSSION

Immigrants in Norway face challenges in the educational sector. For example, immigrant children show lower performance in elementary school and immigrant adolescents are overrepresented in high school drop-out rates with large variations depending of their country of origin (Instebo, 2021; SSB, 2019, 2021a, 2021b). In addition, immigrant students at higher education institutions have a 10% lower graduation rate compared to native students (SSB, 2021d). Norway’s Directorate of Integration and Diversity has defined higher education as a key indication of immigrant integration (IMDi, 2021). This is in line with international researchers’ and policy makers’ claim that the integration of immigrants heavily relies on the attainment of higher education because

academic achievement is important for sociocultural adaptation and skill acquisition (e.g., Ward & Kennedy, 1996). Social relationships with academic peers are related to the academic adaptation of immigrant students (Kim, 2009; Teja & Schonert-Reichl, 2013). Therefore, investigating causes of ethnic disparities in education with a focus on social relationships in Norway is crucial.

In the present work, we investigated the role of social identity threat as a form of social stigma due to widespread negative stereotypes about immigrant groups in the academic context. Negative stereotypes consist of attributes that are socially devalued (e.g., not having sufficient ability or intelligence to be successful in the educational domain) and therefore immigrant students are likely to be stigmatized in higher education. We proposed that the perception of being negatively stereotyped and stigmatized has detrimental consequences for immigrant students' social relationships. In line with this, the current research showed that the more immigrant students were concerned about being negatively stereotyped in the academic context, the lower was their sense of belonging to university, which in turn related to lower motivation and behavioral intentions to seek out events in which they could establish and maintain positive interpersonal relationships with other students. This is particularly problematic when considering that young adulthood is a period in which forming social relationships is an important task and that social approach motivation has an especially important function in the transitional phase into adulthood (Nikitin & Freund, 2008, 2017). Reduced sense of belonging is thus a risk factor for immigrant students and could lead to social isolation, which in turn might diminish academic adjustment.

We used two subscales to measure social identity threat, namely group-concept threat (i.e., the fear of confirming negative stereotypes about one's group in one's own mind) and group-reputation threat (i.e., the fear of confirming negative stereotypes about one's group in the minds of outgroup members; Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). In most cases, the results of the subscales pointed in the same direction, with the relationships involving group-reputation threat being descriptively stronger than those involving group-concept threat. This might be the case because the fear of confirming negative stereotypes in the minds of outgroup members (i.e., native Norwegians) is more proximal to peer relations than the fear of confirming negative stereotypes in one's own mind. In the context of social stigma, group-reputation threat might represent the notion that others recognize that an immigrant student belongs to a negatively stereotyped group, which is likely perceived as a discrediting and thus stigmatizing attribute. If stigma is conceptualized within social interactions (Goffman, 1963), it follows that group-reputation threat is more detrimental for social approach motivation than group-concept threat. Future research should replicate these effects with other negatively stereotyped groups.

Surprisingly, we found—in contrast to H1—a significant positive relationship between group-reputation threat and social approach motivation meaning that the more immigrant students perceived negative stereotypes that threatened their groups' reputation at university, the more they were motivated to approach other students. This result should be interpreted with caution, as it was not found in previous studies with other negatively stereotyped groups (Martiny & Nikitin, 2019; Rahn et al., 2021). Nevertheless, such a positive relationship might be explained by the fact that in the present work, we did not differentiate between the motivation to approach ingroup members (i.e., other immigrants) versus outgroup members (i.e., native Norwegians) and our instructions might have triggered that (at least some) immigrant students thought about social approach motivation toward ingroup members. In line with predictions of the source model of group threat (Greenaway & Cruwys, 2019) as well as in line with research on ethnic homophily (e.g., Leszczensky & Pink, 2015) and the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999), immigrant students' motivation to approach other immigrant students might have increased when having concerns about being negatively stereotyped by host-society members.

However, their motivation to approach host-society members (i.e., native Norwegians) might have decreased. With the present research, we were not able to disentangle these potentially opposing effects. Therefore, further studies should examine whether the effect of social identity threat on social approach motivation for stigmatized group members depends on whether they think about approaching ethnic in- or outgroup members (see Ciftci et al., 2020 for a related study in the context of workplace sexism). A further possible explanation of the positive relationship of group-reputation threat and social approach motivation is that feeling that the ingroup's reputation is threatened by negative stereotypes might not only trigger social retreat, but could also trigger efforts to approach outgroup members as a group-benefitting attempt to refute or confront the stereotypes (e.g., Munder et al., 2020) by socializing with the majority. This possible alternative mechanism to explain the unexpected positive direct relationship between group-reputation threat and social approach motivation was not assessed in the present research and should be tested in future studies.

Finally, we found that a simultaneous strong national and ethnic identity (i.e., integrated multiple identities) acted as a buffer against the negative consequences of group-reputation threat (but not group-concept threat) for sense of belonging. This is in line with research on the bi-dimensional model of acculturation showing that integration (high maintenance of the heritage culture and high adoption of the host culture; e.g., Berry, 1997) is most beneficial for immigrants' psychological and sociocultural adaptation (e.g., Berry, 2007). As discussed above, the fact that group-reputation threat is more proximal to social interactions than group-concept threat might also explain the diverging findings concerning its relation to multiple social identities. It might be the case that immigrant students' identification with their ethnic and national group only plays a role for their sense of belonging when they worry to confirm the stereotype about their group in the minds of their (Norwegian) classmates, but not in their own minds.

In contrast to Baysu and Phalet (2019), who showed detrimental effects of dual identification on standardized test performance in high-threat environments, our data point toward buffering effects of dual identification in the social domain. One explanation for these diverging findings might be that the processes through which the consequences of social identity threat unfold in these two domains might differ (increased test anxiety vs. reduced sense of belonging). Future research should therefore investigate the consequences of social identity threat in both domains simultaneously.

Practical implications

The main findings of the current research inform recommendations for governments and policy makers about how to improve the situation of immigrant students at higher education institutions. First, universities should promote an open, welcoming, and inclusive climate that particularly supports vulnerable and stigmatized group members at the beginning of their studies. A recently published meta-analytic review provides a taxonomy of interventions aiming to reduce social identity threat effects (Liu et al., 2021). The authors propose three kinds of interventions (belief-based, identity-based, and resilience-based interventions). Two interventions that fall into the category of belief-based interventions might be particularly beneficial for immigrant students at higher education institutions. The first group of interventions directly focuses on reducing the uncertainty that people feel about their social belonging to academic professional settings (Liu et al., 2021). For example, in an empirical test of this kind of interventions, Walton and Cohen (2011) implemented an intervention in US universities in which concerns about belonging were

presented as common, temporary, due to the challenging nature of the college transition and independent of group membership. Participants were then encouraged to internalize these messages. Results showed that this intervention improved African American students' performance, sense of belonging, well-being, and health. In addition, role model interventions have been used in which stigmatized group members read about (or meet) ingroup members who were successful in the negatively stereotyped domain. This can help to disconfirm the negative stereotype and remove the stigma associated with the group membership (Good et al., 2008; McIntyre et al., 2005). Another route for interventions would be to systematically foster social relationships and mutual collaboration in the classroom. For example, the jigsaw classroom method (E. Aronson et al., 1978) promotes collaboration in heterogeneous groups by breaking up (ethnic) segregation and introducing reciprocal interdependence between students. By fostering intergroup contact and recategorization processes, stigmatization and intergroup prejudice are reduced. The jigsaw method could therefore also help to alleviate the interpersonal consequences of social identity threat.

Second, European governments should implement measures and structures that enable immigrants in general and immigrant students in particular to develop both a strong national and a strong ethnic identity. Whereas ethnic identity is typically strongly endorsed by immigrants (e.g., Froehlich et al., 2020; Martiny et al., 2017, 2020), national identity development needs to be fostered and supported. Earlier research has shown that positive contact with host-society members is positively associated with young immigrants' national identity (Froehlich et al., 2020; Martiny et al., 2017, 2020) and that negative stereotypes can hinder a successful integration of immigrants' multiple social identities (e.g., Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Hirsh & Kang, 2016). Moreover, experiences of discrimination hinder immigrants' national identity development (e.g., Fleischmann et al., 2019; Leszczensky et al., 2020). Thus, policy makers need to promote an inclusive, non-judgmental climate within their countries. Such a climate is characterized by low levels of institutional or structural discrimination (e.g., Pincus, 2019) as well as by social norms fostering positive intergroup contact and corresponding contact opportunities (e.g., Kauff et al., 2021). Further, integrated multiple social identities would be fostered if not only the immigrants, but also the host-society members favor the acculturation orientation of integration. Currently, in many Western European countries including Norway, there is rather high pressure on immigrants to assimilate (i.e., reduce attachment to their heritage culture and adopt the way of life of the host culture; e.g., Gharaei et al., 2018). In Norway, the situation for immigrants seems to be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, there was a steep increase in naturalizations—predominantly from immigrants of non-Western origin—after dual citizenship was permitted in 2020 (Molstad & Naz, 2021). On the other hand, recent research shows that children of immigrants in Norway who self-identify as Norwegians are not always perceived by others as Norwegian (Friberg, 2021). Friberg's work shows that while children of European immigrant origin report that others see them as being Norwegian, children of immigrants from Africa and Asia report non-recognized national identity. That means that this group reports that others see them as being far less “Norwegian” than how they see themselves. Consequently, negative stereotypes and identity conflict might still hinder non-Western immigrants' integration despite their citizenship naturalization. These latter results point to an active role of the majority group in integration: Whereas attitudes toward immigrants and immigration in Norway have become more positive over the last 10 years (SSB, 2021a), there is still a long way to go toward an inclusive and multicultural society in Norway. Nevertheless, multicultural societies have the potential to develop matching acculturation orientations of integration by immigrants and host-society members in which natives might even adopt cultural practices of immigrants (e.g., Kunst et al., 2015, 2021).

Limitations and future directions

Despite the important contribution the present work makes to how stigma can shape interpersonal relationships, some limitations need to be addressed. First, in the present study we used a correlational design that provides only weak causal evidence. Further research should therefore investigate the present research questions using a longitudinal design following immigrant students over the course of their studies or expand the experimental designs inducing social identity threat reported in Martiny and Nikitin (2019) to include multiple social identities as moderators in the context of ethnicity. In fact, previous experimental studies supported the proposed causality in another social group (Martiny & Nikitin, 2019). In addition, research shows that not all immigrant students experience the same stereotypes and the same forms of discrimination. Thus, it would be interesting to differentiate between different immigrant groups and different stereotypes. Since, Norway is a small country, it is difficult to recruit a sufficient number of immigrant students from different ethnic groups. At the same time, the fact that we consistently showed the predicted patterns across different immigrant groups and across different immigrant generations might indicate that the psychological mechanisms are similar and relatively independent of the specific ethnic group the immigrants belong to and how long they reside in the receiving country. Moreover, the samples in the current research consisted of immigrants who were studying at university, which means that they are educationally successful despite the overall lower academic achievement of immigrants in general. Future research should thus investigate the proposed relationships with immigrant high-school students, as not all immigrants reach tertiary education, which limits the generalizability of the findings. However, we would expect the effects to be even stronger in younger immigrant groups, as stereotype threat has been shown to be associated with academic attrition (e.g., Beasley & Fischer, 2012). Finally, the present findings should be replicated in other migrant-receiving countries with varying degrees of assimilative pressure toward immigrants (e.g., Germany, the Netherlands, Canada) to investigate their generalizability.

CONCLUSION

In the present work, we focus on an important, yet understudied topic, namely the interpersonal consequences of social stigma and negative stereotypes. In line with Goffman (1963), we argued that social stigma has to be understood as an interaction between the target and the perceiver of stigma (for the same argument see Doyle & Barreto, *this issue*). Therefore, in the present work, we investigated how social stigma shapes social relationships by investigating consequences of experiencing negative stereotypes on immigrant students' social motivation and behavioral intentions to form and maintain social relationships in higher education institutions. Taken together, our findings highlight the challenges immigrant students face at higher education institutions in Western countries like Norway. Our results show that in addition to direct negative effects of stereotypes on performance that have been demonstrated in earlier research (e.g., Appel et al., 2015; Froehlich et al., 2018), negative stereotypes also hinder immigrant students from developing social relationships in educational contexts. This is important because the further societal integration of immigrants heavily relies on the attainment of higher education.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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