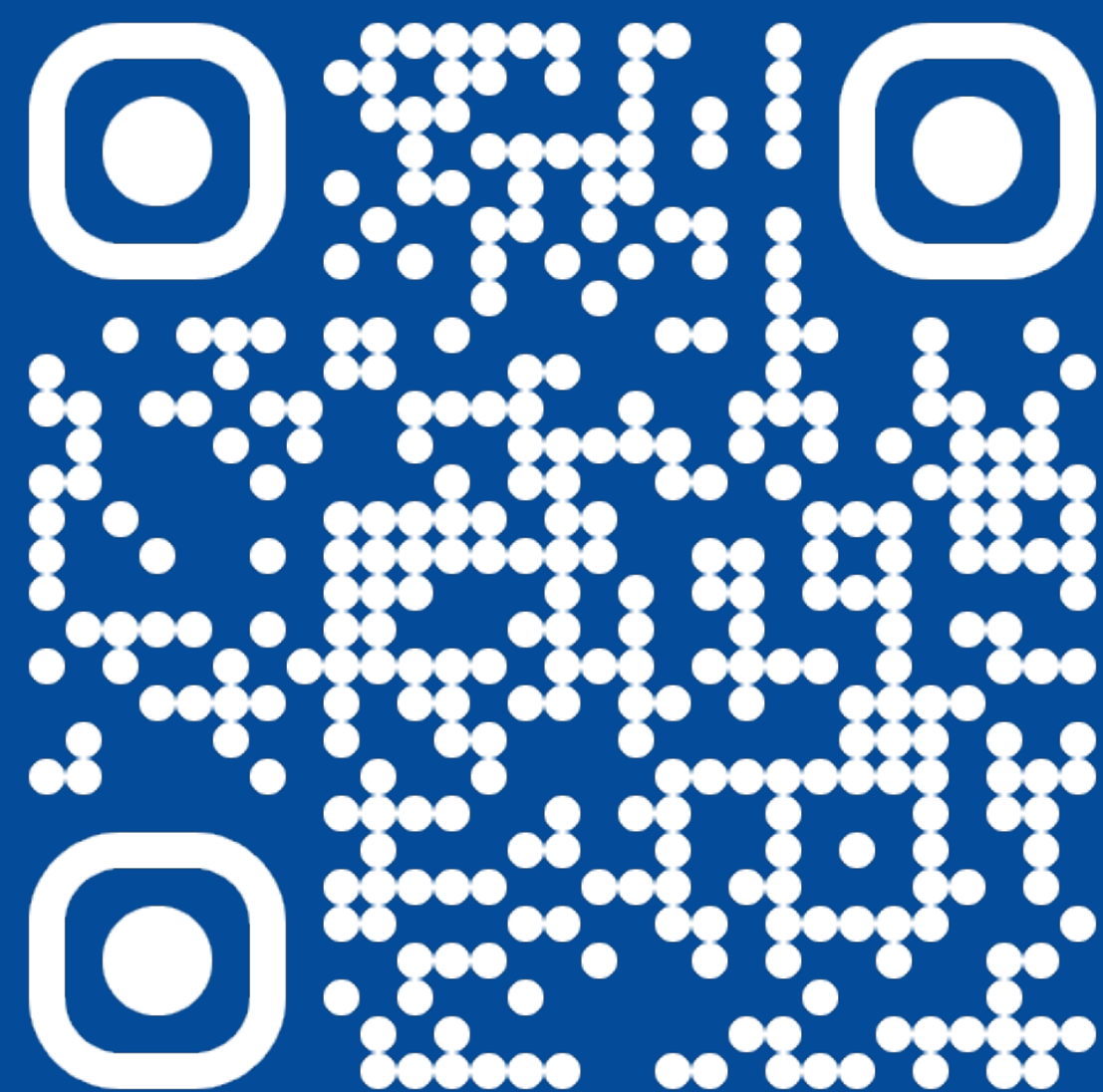


Of Mice and Machines:

Economic thinking and the mechanistic dehumanization of (im)migrants



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Do people dehumanize economic and non-economic immigrants differently?

Anti-immigrant rhetoric often dehumanizes immigrants and refugees by comparing them to vermin or referring to their migration as ‘floods’ or ‘hordes’.

(Esses, Medianu, & Sutter, 2021; Marshall & Shapiro, 2018)

To counter anti-immigrant sentiment, people often talk about the economic contributions and impact of immigrants.

(Esses et al. 2022; Resnick, 2017)

Economic thinking about immigration, however, has been associated with anti-immigrant attitudes, and may lead to other forms of dehumanization

(Palma & Esses, 2023, pre-print)

For example, workers and economically competitive outgroups, while seen as hard-working, are viewed less warmly and experience greater mechanistic dehumanization—where they are likened to machines and denied traits essential to human nature.

(Bai & Zhao, 2021; Fowler & Utych, 2021; Lee & Fiske, 2006; Li et al., 2014; Savaş et al., 2021)

H1: Immigrants selected for skill and economic contribution are more mechanistically dehumanized; non-economic immigrants are more animalistically dehumanized.

H2: Thinking about economic, but not cultural, contribution of immigrants is associated with mechanistic, but not animalistic, dehumanization.

Participants



- N = 500 participants
- 32.5 (11.2) years old
- 72.8% White
- 65.2% born in Canada

Prolific Academic

ETCEI Scale (Palma & Esses, 2023, pre-print)

Economic Thinking



“Decisions about immigration should primarily focus on the country’s economic needs.”

Cultural Enrichment

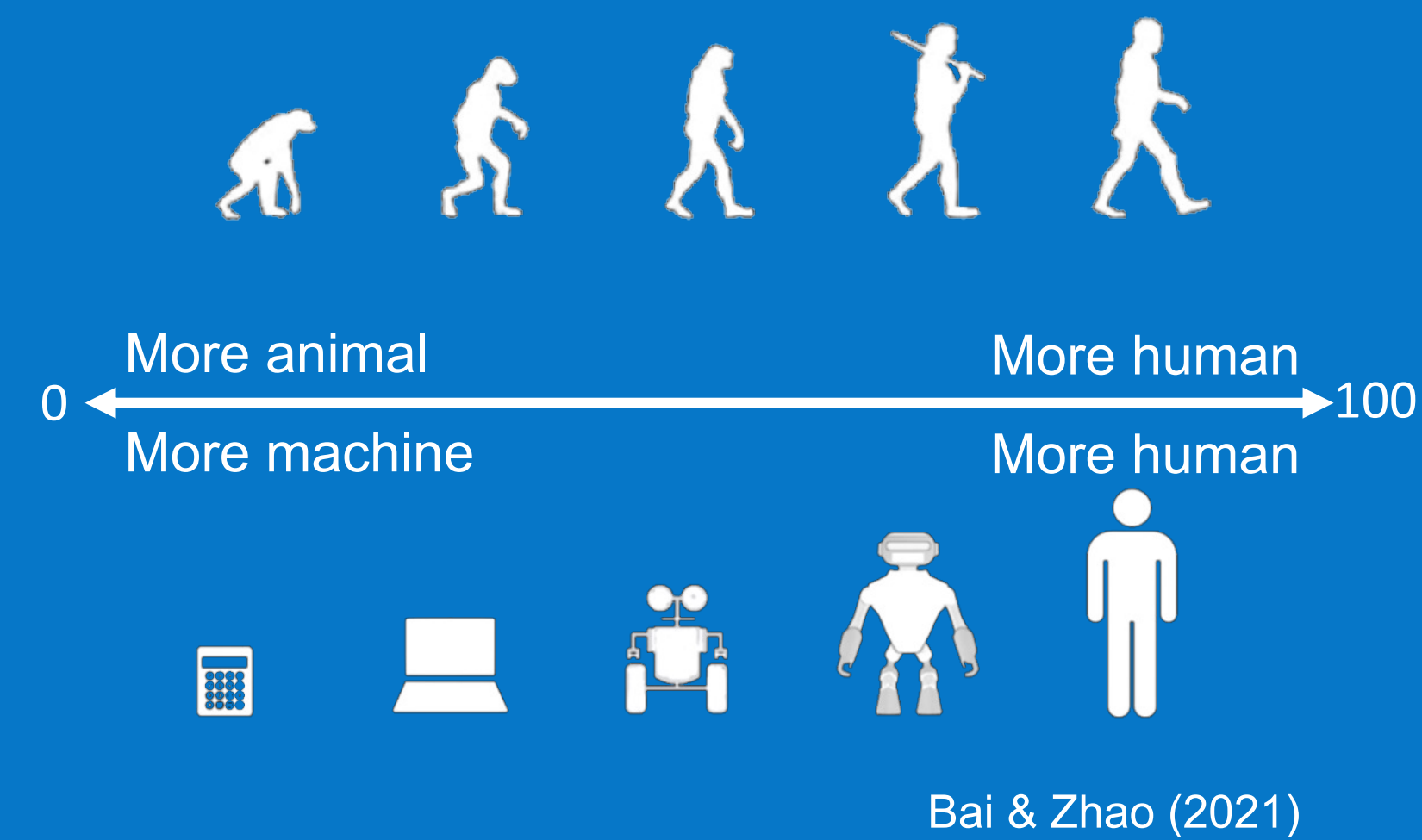


“Immigration improves Canadian society because it brings together people from around the world”

Procedure

Immigration Attitudes

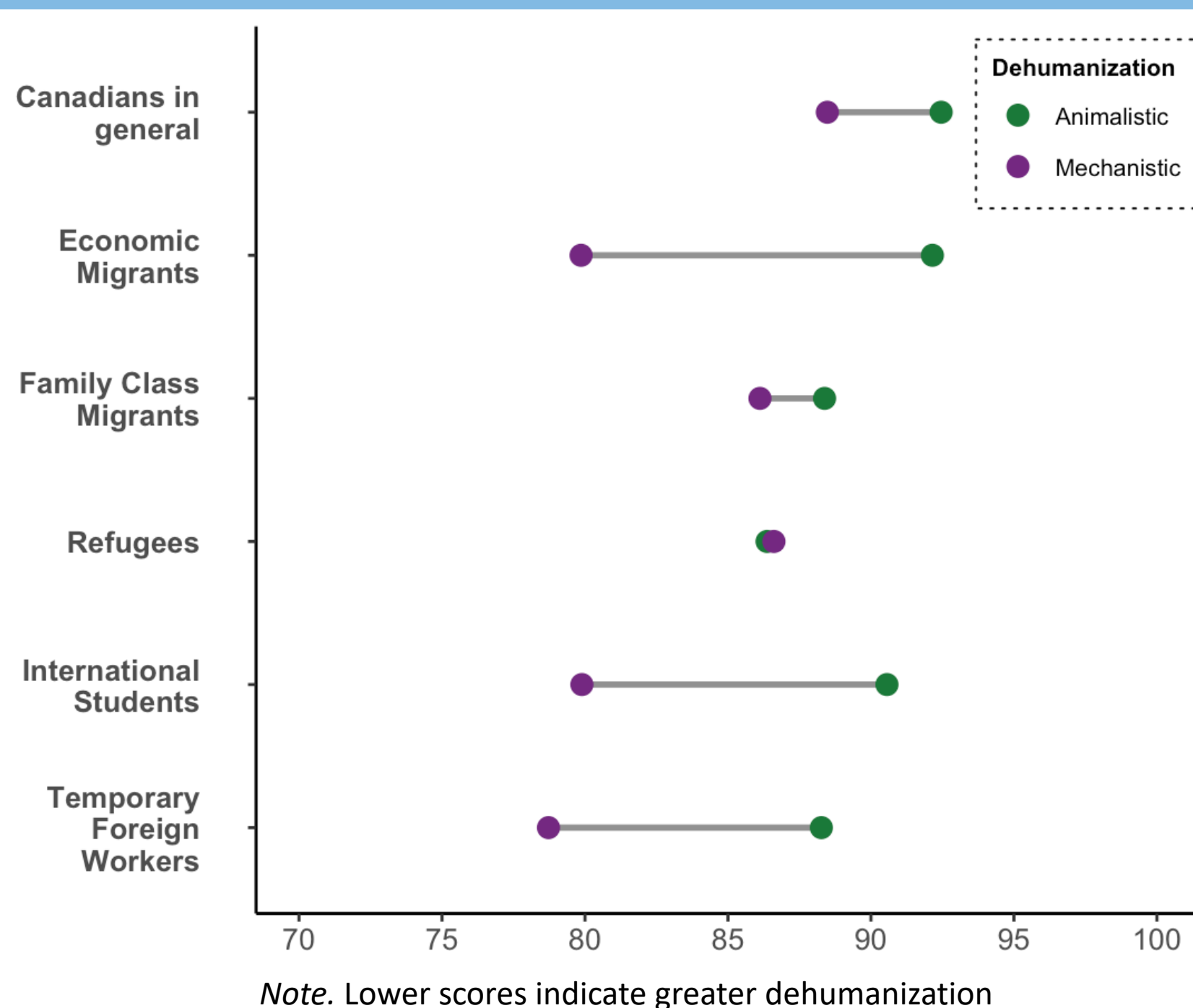
Kteily et al. (2015)



Bai & Zhao (2021)

Blatant Dehumanization

Figure 1. Animalistic vs Mechanistic Dehumanization



H1: Are economic migrants, international students and temporary foreign workers mechanistically dehumanized?

Family class migrants and refugees experience greater animalistic dehumanization relative to all other groups, but experience similar levels of animalistic and mechanistic dehumanization overall (Figure 1).

Economic migrants, international students, and temporary foreign workers experience greater mechanistic (vs animalistic) dehumanization overall, and are more mechanistically dehumanized relative to all other groups (Figure 1)

H2: Does thinking about economic and cultural contribution affect how people dehumanize immigrants?

Those who score high on economic thinking did not differ on how much they animalistically dehumanized most groups relative to those who score low, with one exception. Refugees were more animalistically dehumanized among those who score high (versus low) on economic thinking (Figure 2A).

Economic thinking was associated with the mechanistic dehumanization of all immigrant groups (Figure 2C).

Cultural enrichment beliefs were associated with an overall decrease in animalistic and mechanistic dehumanization across all groups (Figure 2B, 2C)

Figure 2. Two-way interaction Between Target Group and Economic Thinking / Cultural Enrichment Beliefs on Animalistic and Mechanistic Dehumanization

